EVERYMAN,
I WILL GO WITH
THEE
& BE THY GUIDE
IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE



EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY
EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS

POETRY

SHELLEY'S POEMS
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY A. H. KOSZUL

IN TWO VOLS. VOL. TWO

THIS IS NO. 258 OF *EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY*. THE PUBLISHERS WILL BE PLEASED TO SEND FREELY TO ALL APPLICANTS A LIST OF THE PUBLISHED AND PROJECTED VOLUMES ARRANGED UNDER THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

TRAVEL ❦ SCIENCE ❦ FICTION
THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY
HISTORY ❦ CLASSICAL
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
ESSAYS ❦ ORATORY
POETRY & DRAMA
BIOGRAPHY
REFERENCE
ROMANCE

THE ORDINARY EDITION IS BOUND IN CLOTH WITH GILT DESIGN AND COLOURED TOP. THERE IS ALSO A LIBRARY EDITION IN REINFORCED CLOTH

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

POETS ARE THE TRUMPETS WHICH SING TO BATTLE: POETS ARE THE UNACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATORS OF THE WORLD. SHELLEY

THE POETICAL WORKS of PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

VOL II · PLAYS TRANSLATIONS & LONGER POEMS

LONDON & TORONTO
J·M·DENT & SONS
LTD. NEW YORK
E·P·DUTTON & CO

First published in this Edition . . 1907
Reprinted 1910, 1916, 1919, 1925

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

CONTENTS

EPIC

DRAMA

TRANSLATIONS

SHELLEY

Epic

1817

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS

Οσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαΐαις ἁπτόμεσθα
περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
πλόον· ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν ἂν εὕροις
ἐς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυματὰν ὁδόν.
Πινδ. Πυθ. x.

[Comp. near Marlow, in the summer of 1817. Publ. in this form Jan. 1818.]

PREFACE

The Poem which I now present to the world is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem therefore (with the exception of the first canto, which is purely introductory) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind ; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses ; its impatience at "all the oppressions which are done under the sun" ; its tendency to awaken public hope, and to enlighten and improve mankind ; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency ; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom ; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission ; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy ; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers ; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity ; the faithlessness of tyrants ; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms ; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power ; the consequences of legitimate despotism,—civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections ; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty ; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall ; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And, if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and

strong such as belongs to no meaner desires, let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilised mankind produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to realise. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilised world.

Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But, on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleaped the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus, many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,* and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those † of Mr Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been over-shadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have

* I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's *Academical Questions*; a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.

† It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the *Essay on Population* to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of *Political Justice*.

sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education, indeed, can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense; and have read the

Poets and the Historians and the Metaphysicians * whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth, as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepares them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live; though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon †; the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of

* In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

† Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt; and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this as in every other respect I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract, from the midst of insult and contempt and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the Public. If certain Critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings. As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the

tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality; and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that, if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And, although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading

idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

DEDICATION

There is no danger to a man, that knows
What life and death is : there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge ; neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.—CHAPMAN.

To Mary —— ——

I

So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home ;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome ;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy belovèd name, thou Child of love and light.

II

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour,
Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet !
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlacèd branches mix and meet,
Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
Waterfalls leap among wild islands green,
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen :
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near schoolroom, voices, that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
—But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—
So, without shame, I spake:—"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

V

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

VI

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one!—
Such once I sought in vain; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone:—
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clod, until revived by thee.

VII

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
  Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain ;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
  In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
  Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walked as free as light the clouds among,
  Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long !

VIII

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
  Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now : no more companionless,
  Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
  There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
  When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

IX

Now has descended a serener hour,
  And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
  Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
  And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
  Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

X

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
  But strike the prelude of a loftier strain ?
Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
  Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
  Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
  Holier than was Amphion's ? I would fain
Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

XI

And what art thou ? I know, but dare not speak :
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears :
And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
I wonder not—for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory ; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days ; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

XIII

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
Which was the echo of three thousand years ;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
As some lone man who in a desert hears
The music of his home :—unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

XIV

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind !
If there must be no response to my cry—
If men must rise and stamp with fury blind
On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
Sweet friend ! can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

Canto I

I

When the last hope of trampled France had failed
  Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
  The peak of an aëreal promontory,
  Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was hoary ;
And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
  Each cloud, and every wave :—but transitory
The calm : for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
  Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
  Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
  Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow :—not a sound
  Was heard ; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the ground.

III

Hark ! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
  Earth and the ocean. See ! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
  Glitter and boil beneath : it rages on,
  One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by.
  There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
  That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
  Most delicately, and the ocean green,
  Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald : calm was spread
  On all below ; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

V

For ever, as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seem to lie
Far, deep, and motionless; while through the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Passed on, in slow and moving majesty;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI

I could not choose but gaze; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what I knew not, I remained:—the hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour;
So, from that chasm of light a wingèd Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came: the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
And now relaxing its impetuous flight,
Before the aereal rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleamed therein—
Feather and scale, inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin
Shone through the plumes its coils were twined within
By many a swoln and knotted fold, and high
And far, the neck, receding lithe and thin,
Sustained a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

X

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed
Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed,
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed
The wreathed Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes,
A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gathered: in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

XII

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
  Where they had sunk together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
  The wind with his wild writhings; for to break
  That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings
  As in despair, and with his sinewy neck,
Dissolve in sudden shock those linkèd rings,
Then soar—as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
  Thus long, but unprevailing:—the event
Of that portentous fight appeared at length:
  Until the lamp of day was almost spent
  It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent,
Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
  Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent,
With clang of wings and scream the Eagle passed,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
  And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion
  Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
  Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound
  To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
And beautiful, and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
  Sitting beneath the rocks, upon the sand
Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
  An icy wilderness—each delicate hand
  Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she sate
  Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung: she watching aye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quivered; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail
Escaped her; but she rose, and on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair
Poured forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
That opened to the ocean, caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,
What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known
His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
And wept and clasped her hands, and all between,
Renewed the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien;
And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth:—one moment seen,
For ere the next, the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coiled in rest in her embrace it lay.

XXI

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
While yet the daylight lingereth in the skies
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,
And said: "To grieve is wise, but the despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep:
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep."

XXII

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
I wept. "Shall this fair woman all alone,
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go?
His head is on her heart, and who can know
How soon he may devour his feeble prey?"—
Such were my thoughts, when the tide gan to flow;
And that strange boat like the moon's shade did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay:—

XXIII

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curvèd prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now
We are embarked—the mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below,
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV

And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale!
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV

"Speak not to me, but hear! Much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn:
Know then, that from the depth of ages old,
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,
Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI

"The earliest dweller of the world, alone,
Stood on the verge of chaos. Lo! afar
O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar:
A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood,
All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war,
In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood
That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his brother's blood.

XXVII

"Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,
For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good—for his immortal foe,
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII

"The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things,
Was Evil's breath and life; this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings;
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed; for none
Knew good from evil, though their names were hung
In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own,—

XXIX

"The Fiend, whose name was Legion; Death, Decay,
Earthquake, and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
Wingèd and wan diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
Of food and mirth hiding his mortal head;
And, without whom all these might nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX

"His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
In air, and light, and thought, and language, dwell;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men—invisible,
But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
Black-wingèd demon forms—whom, from the hell,
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI

"In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations . . . Soon the Spirit of Good,
Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
Which shrank and fled; and with that Fiend of blood
Renewed the doubtful war . . . Thrones then first shook,
And earth's immense and trampled multitude
In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook

XXXII

"Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came,
Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame
Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name!
And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII

" Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive
With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive,
And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth with Custom's hydra brood
Wage silent war ; when Priests and Kings dissemble
In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
When round pure hearts a host of hopes assemble,
The Snake and Eagle meet—the world's foundations tremble !

XXXIV

" Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears ;
Though thou may'st hear that earth is now become
The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
The vile reward of their dishonoured years,
He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend,
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV

" List, stranger, list, mine is an human form,
Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now !
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm
With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep,
In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI

" Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the sea-shore in a deep mountain-glen ;
And near the waves, and through the forests wild,
I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled :
For I was calm while tempest shook the sky :
But when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
I wept, sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII

"These were forebodings of my fate—before
  A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore:
  A dying poet gave me books, and blessed
  With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watched him as he died away—
  A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
Of our lone mountains: and this lore did sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII

"Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold
  I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
For they weep not; and Wisdom had unrolled
  The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe,—
  To few can she that warning vision show—
For I loved all things with intense devotion;
  So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide
    commotion.

XXXIX

"When first the living blood through all these veins
  Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
  Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
  I saw, and started from my cottage-hearth;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness,
  Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth—
And laughed in light and music: soon, sweet madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL

"Deep slumber fell on me: my dreams were fire—
  Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
Like shadows o'er my brain; and strange desire,
  The tempest of a passion, raging over
  My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,—
Which passed; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far,
  Came—then I loved; but not a human lover!
For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star
Shone through the woodbine-wreaths which round my case-
    ment were.

XLI

"'Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
I watched, till by the sun made pale, it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea;
But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
Into one thought—one image—yes, for ever!
Even like the dayspring, poured on vapours dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Through my benighted mind—and were extinguished never.

XLII

"The day passed thus: at night, methought in dream
A shape of speechless beauty did appear:
It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere;
A wingèd youth, his radiant brow did wear
The Morning Star: a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips, impressed a lingering kiss,—

XLIII

"And said: 'A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
How wilt thou prove thy worth?' Then joy and sleep
Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep;
But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore: that Spirit's tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV

"How, to that vast and peopled city led,
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walked among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deeds with evil men,
Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurned at peace, and power, and fame—and when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth:

XLV

"Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said—
Know then, that when this grief had been subdued,
I was not left, like others, cold and dead;
The Spirit whom I loved, in solitude
Sustained his child: the tempest-shaken wood,
The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
These were his voice, and well I understood
His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright
With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.

XLVI

"In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers
When thought revisits them:—know thou alone,
That after many wondrous years were flown,
I was awakened by a shriek of woe;
And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe."

XLVII

"Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart?"
"Fear it!" she said, with brief and passionate cry,
And spake no more: that silence made me start—
I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky;
Beneath the rising moon seen far away,
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high,
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters—these we did approach alway.

XLVIII

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—
Wild music woke me: we had passed the ocean
Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noontide day.
Ethereal mountains shone around—a Fane
Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream
Reared in the cities of enchanted land :
'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
Girt by the deserts of the Universe ;
Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse,
Or sculpture's marble language, can invest
That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the labouring brain and overburdened breast.

LI

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose blosmy forests starred the shadowy deep,
The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap :
We disembarked, and through a portal wide
We passed—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought ; immovable, deep-eyed.

LII

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof
Was diamond, which had drank the lightning's sheen
In darkness, and now poured it through the woof
Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
Its blinding splendour—through such veil was seen
That work of subtlest power, divine and rare ;
Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
And hornèd moons, and meteors strange and fair,
On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere !

LIII

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
  Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright
  With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day;
  And on the jasper walls around, there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
  Which did the Spirit's history display;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which, in their wingèd dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
  The Great, who had departed from mankind,
A mighty Senate;—some, whose white hair shone
  Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind;
  Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair;
  And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined
With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
  Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
  Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came
  Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name
And fell; and vanished slowly from the sight.
  Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its spherèd stars with supernatural night.

LVI

Then first, two glittering lights were seen to glide
  In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
  Like meteors on a river's grassy shore,
  They round each other rolled, dilating more
And more—then rose, commingling into one,
  One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
Was cloven ; beneath the planet sate a Form,
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine. He sate
Majestic, yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

LVIII

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow—a hand supported me,
Whose touch was magic strength : an eye of blue
Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly ;
And a voice said :—" Thou must a listener be
This day—two mighty Spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea,
They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn ;
A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn !"

LIX

I looked, and lo ! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Through the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world—his gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curvèd lips half-open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful : but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
Which through her floating locks and gathered cloak,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone :—
None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue as thus he silence broke.

Canto II

I

The starlight smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which, shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamplight through the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

II

In Argolis, beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead :—but others came
Soon, in another shape : the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
Victims who worshipped ruin,—chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state
Yet, flattering power, had given its ministers
A throne of judgement in the grave :—'twas fate,
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV

The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
And stabled in our homes,—until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied
In evil, slave and despot ; fear with lust
Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
The colours of the air since first extended
It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
To see or feel: a darkness had descended
On every heart: the light which shows its worth,
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind;
All that despair from murdered hope inherits
They sought, and in their helpless misery blind.
A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
And stronger tyrants:—a dark gulf before,
The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned; behind,
Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death!—well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

VIII

For they all pined in bondage; body and soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
Before one Power, to which supreme control
Over their will by their own weakness lent,
Made all its many names omnipotent;
All symbols of things evil, all divine;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare; did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts: a tameless multitude!

X

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise; in the northern Heaven,
Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath our planet pale;
Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins gray its everlasting wail!

XI

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII

Such man has been, and such may yet become!
Ay, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too long,
Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
In darkness and in ruin !—Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their wingèd child have found—
Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust
The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust !

XIV

It must be so—I will arise and waken
The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
The swoon of ages, it shall burst and fill
The world with cleansing fire ; it must, it will—
It may not be restrained !—and who shall stand
Amid the rocking earthquake steadfast still,
But Laon ? on high Freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leaguèd storms withstand !

XV

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins gray
I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope ;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
The burden of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast :
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

XVI

These hopes found words through which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy,
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie
Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language : and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
Through darkness wide and deep those trancèd spirits smite.

XVII

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother,
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them—and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem,
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
Did Laon and his friend, on one gray plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep:
And that this friend was false, may now be said
Calmly—that he like other men could weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less
With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX

With deathless minds which leave where they have passed
A path of light, my soul communion knew;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons;—round my heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power,
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
Were lodestars of delight, which drew me home
When I might wander forth; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child: so when sad hours were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
Heartless and false, I turned from all, to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine:
Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought
Some tale, or thine own fancies, would engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion, o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being—in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert: she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's dark stream.

XXIV

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair;
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things, had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
  To love in human life—this playmate sweet,
This child of twelve years old—so she was made
  My sole associate, and her willing feet
  Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet,
Beyond the aereal mountains whose vast cells
  The unreposing billows ever beat,
Through forests wide and old, and lawny dells
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
  When twined in mine: she followed where I went,
Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
  It had no waste but some memorial lent
  Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind: then, Cythna by my side,
  Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
  For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us:
  And when the pauses of the lulling air
  Of noon beside the sea, had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
  And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

XXVIII

And, in the murmur of her dreams was heard
  Sometimes the name of Laon:—suddenly
She would arise, and, like the secret bird
  Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
  With her sweet accents—a wild melody!
Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong
  The source of passion, whence they rose, to be;
Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung—

XXIX

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream
  Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great
Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
  Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna sate
  Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
  Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
  Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
A mighty congregation, which were strong
  Where'er they trod the darkness to disperse
  The cloud of that unutterable curse
Which clings upon mankind :—all things became
  Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

XXXI

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
  Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
The very wind on which it rolls away :
  Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet, endowed
  With music and with light, their fountains flowed
In poesy ; and her still and earnest face,
  Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

XXXII

In me, communion with this purest being
  Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
In knowledge, which, in hers mine own mind seeing,
  Left in the human world few mysteries :
  How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cythna !—what a spirit strong and mild,
  Which death, or pain or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness ! what genius wild
Yet mighty, was enclosed within one simple child !

XXXIII

New lore was this—old age, with its gray hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power which brings
Evil, like blight, on man, who, still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world: thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power through which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison-clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
Became my only friend, who had endued
My purpose with a wider sympathy;
Thus, Cythna mourned with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were mewed
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves,
She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
To the hyaena lust, who, among graves,
Over his loathèd meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her:—" Cythna sweet,
Well with the world art thou unreconciled;
Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace; and ere this power can make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
This slavery must be broken"—as I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII

She replied earnestly:—" It shall be mine,
This task, mine, Laon!—thou hast much to gain;
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng around
The Golden City."—Then the child did strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX

I smiled, and spake not.—" Wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
And though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL

" Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest
How a young child should thus undaunted be;
Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest,
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
So to become most good and great and free,
Yet far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI

" Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me ? I remember now,
How once, a slave in tortures doomed to die
Was saved, because in accents sweet and low
He sung a song his Judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death.—All shall relent
Who hear me—tears, as mine have flowed, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world ; a will omnipotent !

XLII

" Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
Through Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells,
There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII

" Can man be free if woman be a slave ?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
To the corruption of a closèd grave !
Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors ? in their home
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
The shape of woman—hoary Crime would come
Behind, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

XLIV

" I am a child :—I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm
Thy Cythna ever—truth its radiant stamp
Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm
Upon her children's brow, dark Falsehood to disarm.

XLV

"Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean gray;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
I shall remain alone—and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
And, multitudinous as the desert sand
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI

"Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire which not the loosened fountain
Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
Of evil, catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them;—Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that binds
Her childhood now, and through the paths of men
Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's den.

XLVII

"We part!—O Laon, I must dare nor tremble
To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke!
Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?"—As thus she spoke
The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears—sudden she 'woke
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly pressed
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possessed.

XLVIII

"We part to meet again—but yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep holds no recess,
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
We might survive all ills in one caress:
Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven:—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain."

XLIX

I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now
The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow ;
So we arose, and by the starlight steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But, pale, were calm with passion—thus subdued
Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home ; where, in this mood
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

Canto III

I

What thoughts had sway o'er Cythna's lonely slumber
That night, I know not ; but my own did seem
As if they might ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
Of mind ; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme :
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds passed,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make gray the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space :
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled :
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna ; drooping briony, pearled
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
But Nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be,
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown,
In this strange vision, so divine to me,
That, if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended,
And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere
Of the calm moon—when suddenly was blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete,
And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
Through the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me—through the darkness spread
Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
Upon my flight; and ever, as we fled,
They plucked at Cythna—soon to me then clung
A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,
Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured around
Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armèd men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII

And, ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek—
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far and low,
Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek,
And grasping a small knife, I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry!
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage:—so I passed quietly
Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie.

VIII

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked on me:
So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her—
"Farewell! farewell!" she said, as I drew nigh.
"At first my peace was marred by this strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX

"Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope,
These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
Their mistress to her task—it was my scope
The slavery where they drag me now, to share,
And among captives willing chains to wear
Awhile—the rest thou knowest—return, dear friend!
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend."

X

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew
With seeming-careless glance; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
To guard some other victim—so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

XI

What followed then, I know not—for a stroke
On my raised arm and naked head, came down,
Filling my eyes with blood—when I awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town,
By the steep path were bearing me: below,
The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

XII

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power—and when the shades of evening lie
On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken daylight far through the aërial waste.

XIII

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there:
And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torch's fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass
Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom were drowned.

XV

The noon was calm and bright:—around that column
The overhanging sky and circling sea
Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
So that I knew not my own misery:
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Swayed in the air :—so bright, that noon did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below, the smoke of roofs involved in flame
Rested like night, all else was clearly shown
In that broad glare, yet sound to me none came,
But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon !
A ship was lying on the sunny main,
Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
Its shadow lay beyond—that sight again
Waked, with its presence, in my trancèd brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold :
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapped
Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapped.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark :
Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more !—I sought to close mine eyes,
But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark ;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise,
My parchèd skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die :
O Liberty ! forgive the base endeavour,
Forgive me, if, reserved for victory,
The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.—
That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
Into my soul—linkèd remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
And die, I questioned not; nor, though the Sun
Its shafts of agony kindling through the air
Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,
Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI

Two days thus passed--I neither raved nor died—
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
Built in mine entrails; I had spurned aside
The water-vessel, while despair possessed
My thoughts, and now no drop remained! The uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
Which had been left, was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep
With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,—
A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless!

XXIII

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember —like a choir of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance;
Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
Of Ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels,
Foul, ceaseless shadows:—thought could not divide
The actual world from these entangling evils,
Which so bemocked themselves, that I descried
All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

XXIV

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
  Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew,
  Was not a phantom of the realms accursed,
  Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first
I know not yet, was it a dream or no.
  But both, though not distincter, were immersed
In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV

Methought that grate was lifted, and the seven
  Who brought me thither four stiff corpses bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
  Hung them on high by the entangled hair:
  Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair:
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
  And eagerly, out in the giddy air,
Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
  The dwelling of the many-coloured worm,
Hung there; the white and hollow cheek I drew
  To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
  Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
  Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth!—A whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tossed.

XXVII

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
  Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
  On the verge of formless space—it languished there,
  And dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine:—in the deep
  The shape of an old man did then appear,
Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

XXVIII

And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw
  That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
  My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
  Of senseless death would be accorded soon ;—
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
  Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines ; the grate did then unclose,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled :
  As they were loosened by that Hermit old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
  To answer those kind looks—he did enfold
  His giant arms around me, to uphold
My wretched frame, my scorchèd limbs he wound
  In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
As dew to drooping leaves ;—the chain, with sound
Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair did bound,

XXX

As, lifting me, it fell !—What next I heard,
  Were billows leaping on the harbour-bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
  My hair ;—I looked abroad, and saw a star
  Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
  Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark,
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI

For now indeed, over the salt sea-billow
  I sailed : yet dared not look upon the shape
Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow
  For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
  And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
Fearing it was a fiend : at last, he bent
  O'er me his aged face, as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent,
And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII

A soft and healing potion to my lips
  At intervals he raised—now looked on high,
To mark if yet the starry giant dips
  His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly,
  Though he said little, did he speak to me.
"It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
  Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!"
I joyed as those a human tone to hear,
Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

XXXIII

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
  Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams,
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
  The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
  Of morn descended on the ocean-streams,
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
  Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV

And then the night-wind steaming from the shore,
  Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
  Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly;
  Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove,
  As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing, into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

Canto IV

I

The old man took the oars, and soon the bark
  Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone;
It was a crumbling heap, whose portal dark
  With blooming ivy-trails was overgrown;
  Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
  Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that gray tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art, nursed amid Nature's brood.

II

When the old man his boat had anchorèd,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And every few, but kindly words he said,
And bore me through the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fallen.—We came at last
To a small chamber, which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze,
The old man opened them ; the moonlight lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home :
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray
The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,—
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains :—did my spirit wake
From sleep as many-coloured as the snake
That girds eternity ? in life and truth,
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake ?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth ?

V

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness,
Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
With supernatural shades of clinging sadness ;
That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,
By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
Like a strong spirit ministrant of good :
When I was healed, he led me forth to show
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
From all my madness told ; like mine own heart,
Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips—it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
When mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled,
My thoughts their due array did re-assume
Through the enchantments of that Hermit old ;
Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot,
And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought—
That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves ;—his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed :
Through peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts :—he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
Which made them abject, would preserve them so ;
And in such faith, some steadfast joy to know,
He sought this cell : but when fame went abroad,
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood ;

X

And that the multitude was gathering wide,—
His spirit leaped within his aged frame,
In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame
Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came:
Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
Was as a sword, of truth—young Laon's name
Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

XI

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
" Since this," the old man said, " seven years are spent,
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept; the hope which wildered it has lent
Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII

" Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told,
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII

" In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love, till life seemed melting through their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope now find;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain brook.

XIV

"The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the streets,
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart; but when one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Though he says nothing, that the truth is known;
Murderers are pale upon the judgement seats,
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

XV

"Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
Bloody and false, and cold:—as whirlpools draw
All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI

"For I have been thy passive instrument"—
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleamed on me like a spirit's)—"thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear
That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance
Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
Of good, was o'er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII

"But I, alas! am both unknown and old,
And though the woof of wisdom I know well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold
In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell,
My manners note that I did long repel;
But Laon's name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailèd crest of wrong.

XVIII

"Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare
Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength
Of words—for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
The tyrant's heaviest yoke, arise, and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear,
And with these quiet words—"For thine own sake
I prithee spare me";—did with ruth so take

XIX

"All hearts, that even the torturer who had bound
Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
Loosened her, weeping then; nor could be found
One human hand to harm her—unassailed
Therefore she walks through the great City, veiled
In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
'Gainst scorn, and death and pain thus trebly mailed,
And blending, in the smiles of that defence,
The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence.

XX

"The wild-eyed women throng around her path:
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust
They congregate:—in her they put their trust;
The tyrants send their armèd slaves to quell
Her power;—they, even like a thunder gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI

"Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armèd wrong
Trembles before her look, though it be strong;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng!
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite,

XXII

" And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness :—
In squalid huts, and in its palaces
Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil, and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

XXIII

" So in the populous City, a young maiden
Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he
Marks as his own, whene'er with chains o'erladen
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,—
False arbiter between the bound and free ;
And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms ; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones.

XXIV

" Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed,
The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
The hoodwinked Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
Many yet stand in her array—" she paves
Her path with human hearts," and o'er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV

" There is a plain beneath the City's wall,
Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast,
Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide, they load the blast
Which bears one sound of many voices past,
And startles on his throne their sceptred foe :
He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
And that his power hath passed away, doth know—
Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow ?

XXVI

"The tyrant's guards resistance yet maintain:
Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood,
They stand a speck amid the peopled plain;
Carnage and ruin have been made their food
From infancy—ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts—the multitude
Surrounding them, with words of human love,
Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII

"Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day those ruthless bands around,
The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope—as, when the sound
Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds confound,
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
The conquerors pause, and oh! may freemen ne'er
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread the murderer!

XXVIII

"If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
A wretched fall!—Uplift thy charmèd voice!
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—
Arise, my friend, farewell!"—As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
And then my youth fell on me like a wind
Descending on still waters—my thin hair
Was prematurely gray, my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX

And though their lustre now was spent and faded,
  Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
The likeness of a shape for which was braided
  The brightest woof of genius, still was seen—
  One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
And left it vacant—'twas her lover's face—
  It might resemble her—it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

XXXI

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
  Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone.
Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
  Which steeped its skirts in gold? or, dark and lone,
  Doth it not through the paths of night unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind upborne
  Pour rain upon the earth? The stars are shown,
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
  I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
  My way. O'er many a mountain chain which rears
  Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor,
  And gaily now meseems serene earth wears
The blosmy spring's star-bright investiture,
A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII

My powers revived within me, and I went
  As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Through many a vale of that broad continent.
  At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
  Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was,
Not like a child of death, among them ever;
  When I arose from rest, a woful mass
That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever.

XXXIV

Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared
The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts.—Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
With whatso'er it finds, or flowers or weeds!
Could she be Cythna?—Was that corpse a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?
Why was this hope not torture? Yet it made
A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

Canto V

I

Over the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep:—the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp below,
Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow;
The City's moonlit spires and myriad lamps,
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earthquake stamps.

II

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light,
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound.—Oh, what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night!
How many hearts impenetrably veiled
Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight
Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged through that silent throng; a war that never failed!

III

And now the Power of Good held victory,
So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went;
The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed
An armèd youth—over his spear he bent
His downward face.—"A friend!" I cried aloud,
And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme!
Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim:
And all he while, methought, his voice did swim
As if it drownèd in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim:
At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
He looked on me, and cried in wonder—"Thou art here!"

V

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found;
But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded;
The truth now came upon me, on the ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread
As from the earth did suddenly arise;
From every tent roused by that clamour dread,
Our bands outsprung and seized their arms—we sped
Towards the sound: our tribes were gathering far.
Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead
Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

VII

Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child
Who brings them food, when winter false and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
They rage among the camp;—they overbear
The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair
Descends like night—when "Laon!" one did cry:
Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
The slaves, and widening through the vaulted sky,
Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

VIII

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern gale:
But swifter still, our hosts encompassèd
Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might nought avail,
Hèmmed them around!—and then revenge and fear
Made the high virtue of the patriots fail:
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear—
I rushed before its point, and cried, "Forbear, forbear!"

IX

The spear transfixed my arm that was uplifted
In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gushed round its point: I smiled, and—"Oh! thou gifted
With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
Flow thus!"—I cried in joy, "thou vital flood,
Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued—
Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

X

"Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep!
Alas, what have ye done? the slightest pain
Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep,
But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
And those whom love did set his watch to keep
Around your tents, truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI

"Oh wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain for ever breed?
We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer, both but Misery feed
With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven!
And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
And all that lives or is, to be hath given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven!

XII

“Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
  Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
To evil thoughts.”—A film then overcast
  My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
  Freshly, swift shadows o’er mine eyes had shed.
When I awoke, I lay mid friends and foes,
  And earnest countenances on me shed
The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose;

XIII

And one whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside,
  With quivering lips and humid eyes;—and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
  Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
  In a strange land, round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
  Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
  Towards the City then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
  Made free by love;—a mighty brotherhood
  Linked by a jealous interchange of good;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
  Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood,
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV

Afar, the city-walls were thronged on high,
  And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky
  Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung;
  As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
  And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had passed.

XVI

Our armies through the City's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there;
And, as we passed through the calm sunny air
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,
The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

XVII

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision:
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled,
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turned to love, from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled,
Because they had done evil:—the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,
"The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!" and fair eyes gifted
With feelings, caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun,—
Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
Where was Laone now?—The words were frozen
Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due,
And when at length one brought reply, that she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
To judge what need for that great throng might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even though that multitude was passing great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succour—Therefore to the gate
Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant !—Silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI

Alone, but for one child, who led before him
A graceful dance : the only living thing
Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
In his abandonment !—She knew the King
Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring
Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
When human steps were heard :—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers—our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
But on her forehead, and within her eye
Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness ; on the throne
She leaned ;—the King, with gathered brow, and lips
Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown
With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded;
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast,
O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
A shade of vanished days,—as the tears passed
Which wrapped it, even as with a father's kiss
I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and, of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare:
Pity, not scorn I felt, though desolate
The desolator now, and unaware
The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave: through portals sculptured deep
With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly,
And as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the starlight; wildered seemèd she,
And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII

At last the tyrant cried, "She hungers, slave,
Stab her, or give her bread!"—It was a tone
Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known;
He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food,—but he
In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne,
And she a nursling of captivity
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change might be.

XXVIII

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no more—
That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone,
Which once made all things subject to its power—
Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour
The past had come again; and the swift fall
Of one so great and terrible of yore,
To desolateness, in the hearts of all
Like wonder stirred, who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
Once in a thousand years, now gathered round
The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers
Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
From the wide multitude: that lonely man
Then knew the burden of his change, and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which through his bosom ran.

XXX

And he was faint withal: I sate beside him
Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share
To his averted lips the child did bear,
But, when she saw he had enough, she ate
And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
Hunger then overcame, and of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
Passed, as when far is heard in some lone dell
The gathering of a wind among the woods—
"And he is fallen!" they cry, "he who did dwell
Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell
Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well
Of blood and tears with ruin! he is here!
Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!"

XXXII

Then was heard—" He who judged let him be brought
To judgement ! blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought !
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil ?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
Or creep within his veins at will ?—Arise !
And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice."

XXXIII

" What do ye seek ? what fear ye," then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, " that ye should shed
The blood of Othman ?—if your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man—beneath heaven spread
In purest light above us all, through earth
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed
For all, let him go free ; until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV

" What call ye *justice* ? Is there one who ne'er
In secret thought has wished another's ill ?—
Are ye all pure ? Let those stand forth who hear,
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be ? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite ?
Alas, such were not pure,—the chastened will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite."

XXXV

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
Paused as I spake, then those who near me were,
Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
Clasped on her lap in silence ;—through the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet
In pity's madness, and to the despair
Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet
His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI

Then to a home for his repose assigned,
  Accompanied by the still throng he went
In silence, where, to soothe his rankling mind,
  Some likeness of his ancient state was lent;
  And if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardoned him, he might have ended
  His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent,
Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

XXXVII

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day
  Whereon the many nations at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away,
  Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
  A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake
  All went. The sleepless silence did recall
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
  I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail,
As to the plain between the misty mountains
  And the great City, with a countenance pale
  I went:—it was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
  Now first from human power the reverend veil
Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

XXXIX

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
  The signs of that innumerable host,
To hear one sound of many made, the warning
  Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tossed,
  While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky
  The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society—
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

XL

To see, like some vast island from the Ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i' the midst; a work, which the devotion
Of millions in one night created there,
Sudden, as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear
The light of genius; its still shadow hid
Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid!

XLI

To hear the restless multitudes for ever
Around the base of that great Altar flow,
As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams through floating clouds on waves below
Falling in pauses, from that Altar dim
As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aëreal hymn.

XLII

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past outworn;
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled;
So with a beating heart I went, and one,
Who having much, covets yet more, resembled;
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII

To the great Pyramid I came: its stair
With female choirs was thronged: the loveliest
Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare;
As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kissed
With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
Like Athos seen from Samothracia, dressed
In earliest light, by vintagers, and one
Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne:

XLIV

A Form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant
The faiths of men: all mortal eyes were drawn,
As famished mariners through strange seas gone
Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light
Of those divinest lineaments—alone
With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

XLV

And, neither did I hear the acclamations,
Which from brief silence bursting, filled the air
With her strange name and mine, from all the nations
Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there
From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair
Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind
And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till like a wind
To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI

Like music of some minstrel heavenly gifted,
To one whom fiends enthral, this voice to me;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea;
As when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
But soon her voice the calmness which it shed
Gathered, and—"Thou art whom I sought to see,
And thou art our first votary here," she said:
"I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!—
And of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread
This veil between us two, that thou beneath
Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII

"For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
Forbid reply;—why men have chosen me
To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world, have borne me hither
To meet thee, long most dear; and now unite
Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beat together,

XLIX

"If our own will as others' law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear;
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!"—
She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne appear;
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
In dream, sceptres and crowns; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;

L

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven's when loveliest
In Autumn eves. The third Image was dressed
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies;
Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms, repressed
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood, mid the throngs which ever ebbed and flowed,
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets, bestowed;
And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze
Of the great Image, as o'er Heaven it glode,
That rite had place; it ceased when sunset's blaze
Burned o'er the isles. All stood in joy and deep amaze—

—When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair :—

I

" Calm art thou as yon sunset ! swift and strong
As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of morning ;
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly,
Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy—
Hark ! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
Of thy voice sublime and holy ;
Its free spirits here assembled,
See thee, feel thee, know thee now,—
To thy voice their hearts have trembled
Like ten thousand clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies !—
Wisdom ! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee, and the elements they chain
And their own will, to swell the glory of thy train.

2

" O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven !
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo ! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee :—now, millions start
To feel thy lightnings through them burning :
Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us ;—Scorn, and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness are desolate—
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free !

3

" Eldest of things, divine Equality !
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
Treasures from all the cells of human thought,
And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee :

The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming, thou in light descending
O'er the wide land which is thine own
Like the Spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men !—
Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4

"My brethren, we are free ! the plains and mountains,
The gray sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers ;—man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow ;
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.
A stormy night's serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;
The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sunrise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace !

5

"My brethren, we are free ! The fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming—
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming ;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness,
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free !

6

"Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!
Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars!
Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!
Victory! Victory! Earth's remotest shore,
Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
The green lands cradled in the roar
Of western waves, and wildernesses
Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans
Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
Shall soon partake our high emotions:
Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear
The Fiend-God, when our charmèd name he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
While Truth with Joy enthronèd o'er his lost empire reigns!"

LII

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night entwining
Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng;
She, like a spirit through the darkness shining,
In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong,
As if to lingering winds they did belong,
Poured forth her inmost soul: a passionate speech
With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
Which whoso heard, was mute, for it could teach
To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIII

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
The withered leaves of Autumn to the lake,
And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
In the shadow of the shores; as dead leaves wake
Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
The multitude so moveless did partake
Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea

Even to the gorge of the first mountain glen
Blazed wide and far: the banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress-tree,
Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red flame,
Reclining, as they ate, of Liberty,
And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn;—to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance; they relenting weep;
Such was this Festival, which from their isles
And continents, and winds, and oceans deep,
All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or creep,—

LVI

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII

Laone had descended from the shrine,
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her from, though now those tones divine
Were silent as she passed; she did unwind
Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain
From seeking her that night, so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watchfire burned beside the dusky main.

LVIII

And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk,
And wit, and harmony of choral strains,

While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in chains
Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
Who feels : but when his zone grew dim in mist
Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow blessed.

Canto VI

I

Beside the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,
With that dear friend I lingered, who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars ; and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapped
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
Of the last watchfire fell, and darkness wrapped
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapped ;

II

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate ; then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall :
And first, one pale and breathless passed us by,
And stared and spoke not ;—then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks—

III

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded : and—" They come ! to arms ! to arms !
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name ! to arms ! "
In vain : for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I lept
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept !

IV

For to the North I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia ;—louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rushed among the rout, to have repelled
That miserable flight—one moment quelled
By voice and looks and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood ; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI

I strove, as, drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive
Who hears its fatal roar :—the files compact
Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm :—into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive
In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
Of blood, from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII

For now the despot's bloodhounds with their prey
Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep
Their gluttony of death ; the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes, the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire :—when the waves smile
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano-isle.

VIII

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion-fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight—
I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light
I trod ;—to me there came no thought of flight,
But with loud cries of scorn which whoso heard
That dreaded death, felt in his veins the might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and still
Retreating with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
With doubt even in success ; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop, not overthrown
It gained the shelter of a grassy hill,
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X

Immovably we stood—in joy I found,
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
Among the mountain-vapours driven around,
The old man whom I loved—his eyes divine
With a mild look of courage answered mine,
And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasped mine a moment—now the line
Of war extended, to our rallying cry
As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

XI

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horseman hewed our unarmed myriads down
Safely, though when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
By hundreds leaping on them :—flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts ; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in the blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged
While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
It 'gan to sink—a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights: a shout of joyance sent
Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized, and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx, which the foe on every side invest.

XIV

That onset turned the foes to flight almost;
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory; so dismounting, close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible;—and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands for ever.

XV

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood,
To mutual ruin armed by one behind
Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good,
Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI

The battle became ghastlier—in the midst
I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell
Alternate victory and defeat, and there
The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

XVII

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging;
Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's swift Bane
When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain;
And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
Thou loathèd slave. I saw all shapes of death
And ministered to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm
Around me fought. At the decline of day
Winding above the mountain's snowy term
New banners shone: they quivered in the ray
Of the sun's unseen orb—ere night the array
Of fresh troops hemmed us in—of those brave bands
I soon survived alone—and now I lay
Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands:

XIX

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering—lo! with reinless speed
A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
Comes trampling over the dead, the living bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword;—the hosts recede
And fly, as through their ranks with awful might,
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

XX

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
And marked its coming: it relaxed its course
As it approached me, and the wind that flows
Through night, bore accents to mine ear whose force
Might create smiles in death—the Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
"Mount with me Laon, now!"—I rapidly obeyed.

XXI

Then: "Away! away!" she cried, and stretched her sword
As 'twere a scourge over the courser's head,
And lightly shook the reins.—We spake no word,
But like the vapour of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow passed.

XXII

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust
Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
Through the desert night we sped, while she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest,
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray
Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast
The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean:—
From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
Of waters, as in spots for ever haunted
By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted
To music, by the wand of Solitude,
That wizard wild, and the far tents implanted
Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curvèd flood.

XXIV

One moment these were heard and seen—another
Passed ; and the two who stood beneath that night,
Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other ;
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna, (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
My own sweet Cythna looked), with joy did quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

XXV

And for a space in my embrace she rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
While my faint arms her languid frame invested :
At length she looked on me, and half unclosing
Her tremulous lips, said : "Friend, thy bands were losing
The battle, as I stood before the King
In bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and, swift as on the whirlwind's wing,

XXVI

"Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
And we are here."—Then turning to the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed ;—
But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
And kissing her fair eyes, said, "Thou hast need
Of rest," and I heaped up the courser's bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone, a hall stood ; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its gray rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
  A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturbed, but, in the shade
  Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress
  With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, whene'er
  The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there
Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
  May pilot us through caverns strange and fair
Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
  Of life, our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
  Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air;
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
  Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

XXX

To the pure all things are pure! Oblivion wrapped
  Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapped,
  Though linkèd years had bound it there; for now
  A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
  Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air:—

XXXI

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
  The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
  Of inexpressive speech:—the youthful years
  Which we together passed, their hopes and fears,
The blood itself which ran within our frames,
  That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
And all the wingèd hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII

Had found a voice—and ere that voice did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and through a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent,
Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
A faint and pallid lustre ; while the song
Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among ;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII

The Meteor showed the leaves on which we sate,
And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
Of her soft hair, which bent with gathered weight
My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which Spring but half uncloses.

XXXIV

The Meteor to its far morass returned :
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still ; and then I felt the blood that burned
Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
Around my heart like fire ; and over all
A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness ? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below ?

XXXVI

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Through tears of a wide mist boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb,
Where far over the world those vapours roll,
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not, from that green
And lone recess, where lapped in peace did lie
Our linkèd frames till, from the changing sky,
That night and still another day had fled;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom:—all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill,
The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the gray ruin shook.

XXXIX

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
Of interchangèd vows, which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
Few were the living hearts which could unite
Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
From linkèd youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

XL

And such is Nature's law divine, that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love,
If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what else might move
All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove
Which shades the springs of Ethiopian Nile,
That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile;

XLI

And clings to them, when darkness may dissever
The close caresses of all duller plants
Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we for ever
Were linked, for love had nursed us in the haunts
Where knowledge, from its secret source enchants
Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants,
As the great Nile feeds Egypt; ever flinging
Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell,
Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air,—
And so we sate, until our talk befell
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison: well,
For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII

Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently; with pain
Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed—the tempest and the night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their night
Borne on all winds.—Far through the streaming rain
Floating at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain.

XLV

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly ;
And when the earth beneath his tameless tread,
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings ;—thus we sped
O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

XLVI

There was a desolate village in a wood
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm ; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls ;—the flames were dead
Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky
Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women, and babes, and men, slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst ;—I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there ;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII

No living thing was there beside one woman,
Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
Was withered from a likeness of aught human
Into a fiend, by some strange misery:
Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,
And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
And cried, "Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the draught!

XLIX

"My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry,
Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
When I came home, one in the blood did lie
Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
Since then I have no longer been a mother,
But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither
I flit about, that I may slay and smother:—
All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together!

L

"What seek'st thou here? The moonlight comes in flashes,—
The dew is rising dankly from the dell—
'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
In my sweet boy, now full of worms—but tell
First what thou seek'st."—"I seek for food."—"'Tis well,
Thou shalt have food; Famine, my paramour,
Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell
Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no more!"

LI

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse:—at length
We came to a lone hut where on the earth
Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead—round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

LII

She leaped upon a pile, and lifed high
  Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried: "Eat!
Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die!"
  And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet,
  Towards her bloodless guests;—that sight to meet,
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
  Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat
Despair, I might have raved in sympathy;
But now I took the food that woman offered me;

LIII

And vainly having with her madness striven
  If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
  The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly,
  As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me, and the mountain gray
  Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate, with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

LIV

And joy was ours to meet: she was most pale,
  Famished, and wet and weary, so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
  As to our home we went, and thus embraced,
  Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e'er the prosperous know: the steed behind
  Trod peacefully along the mountain waste:
We reached our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal-couch reclined.

LV

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
  And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom
  Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
  After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
  Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
Of health, and hope; and sorrow languished near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

Canto VII

I

So we sate joyous as the morning ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
Now lingering on the winds ; light airs did play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
By Liberty's uprise, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude ;
And all that now I was—while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales ; and when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one ; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term,
And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust : and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls ;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

V

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent, and was no longer passionless;
But when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not; then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead—that night
All torture, fear, or horror made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

VII

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul; and words it gave,
Gestures, and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
Which might not be withstood—whence none could save—
All who approached their sphere,—like some calm wave
Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath;
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII

The King felt pale upon his noonday throne:
At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,—
One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill—distorted, bowed and bent.
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison; who nought knew or meant
But to obey: from the fire-isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke ;
They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge ;—the Ethiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X

" Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light, into some shadowy wood,
He plunged through the green silence of the main,
Through many a cavern which the eternal flood
Had scooped, as dark lairs for its monster brood ;
And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pursued
His heels, he wound : until the dark rocks under
He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI

" A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling :
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Through which there shone the emerald beams of heaven
Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven,
Like sunlight through acacia woods at even,
Through which, his way the diver having cloven,
Passed like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII

" And then," she said, " he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth ; that spacious cell
Like an hupaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sun-
beams fell.

XIII

" Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
Left there, when thronging to the moon's command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV

" The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart, was lulled to sleep awhile:
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who, to be the gaoler had been taught
Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought.

XV

" The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping,
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food!—Thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

XVI

" Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle, and the fountain, and the air;
Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life:—a long
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII

" Methought I was about to be a mother—
Month after month went by, and still I dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child ; and still new pulses seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
There was a babe within—and, when the rain
Of winter through the rifted cavern streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

XVIII

" It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine
Thine own, belovèd !—'twas a dream divine ;
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
Though 'twas a dream."—Then Cythna did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift :

XIX

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears :
Which having passed, as one whom sobs oppress
She spoke : " Yes, in the wilderness of years
Her memory, aye, like a green home appears ;
She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears ;
Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,—
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX

" I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and soon
When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
Or sun, from many a prison within the cave
Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI

"Methought her looks began to talk with me ;
And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
Her lips would frame,—so sweet it could not be
That it was meaningless ; her touch would meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
In response while we slept ; and on a day
When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
Both infants, weaving wings for time's perpetual way.

XXII

"Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy, and tired with our delight,
We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother's bosom :—from that night
She fled ;—like those illusions clear and bright,
Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest ;—and her flight,
Though 'twas the death of brainless fantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII

"It seemed that in the dreary night, the diver
Who brought me thither, came again, and bore
My child away. I saw the waters quiver,
When he so swiftly sunk, as once before :
Then morning came—it shone even as of yore,
But I was changed—the very life was gone
Out of my heart—I wasted more and more,
Day after day, and sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV

"I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swoln and changed :—in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain
It ebbed even to its withered springs again :
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
From that most strange delusion, which would fain
Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
With more than human love,—then left it unreturned.

XXV

" So now my reason was restored to me
I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast;
But all that cave and all its shapes, possessed
By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blessed
Me heretofore: I, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI

" Time passed, I know not whether months or years;
For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears:
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed
Till it be thin as air; until, one even,
A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII

" And, when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter; on slow wing,
The Eagle, hovering o'er his prey did float;
But when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat—
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII

" This wakened me, it gave me human strength;
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX

" And where was Laon ? might my heart be dead,
While that far dearer heart could move and be ?
Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread,
Which I had sworn to rend ? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me,
To bring me ropes ; and long in vain I sought
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught ;
But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

XXX

" We live in our own world, and mine was made
From glorious fantasies of hope departed :
Aye we are darkened with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted
Such power to me—I became fearless-hearted,
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
Its lustre on all hidden things, behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI

" My mind became the book through which I grew
Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
To me the keeping of its secrets gave—
One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear ;
Justice, and truth, and time, and the world's natural sphere.

XXXII

" And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought ;
Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within language wrought :
The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In old Crotona ;—and sweet melodies
Of love, in that lorn solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII

" Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
As in a wingèd chariot, o'er the plain
Of crystal youth ; and thou wert there to fill
My heart with joy, and there we sate again
On the gray margin of the glimmering main,
Happy as then but wiser far, for we
Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
Fear, Faith, and Slavery ; and mankind was free,
Equal, and pure, and wise, in Wisdom's prophecy.

XXXIV

" For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtile ministries ;
And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
They would make human throngs gather and rise
To combat with my overflowing eyes,
And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
Familiar with the shock and the surprise
And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts anew.

XXXV

" And thus my prison was the populous earth—
Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
Before the east has given its glory birth—
Religion's pomp made desolate by the scorn
Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
And dwellings of mild people interspersed
With undivided fields of ripening corn,
And love made free,—a hope which we have nursed
Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

XXXVI

" All is not lost ! There is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
Even thronèd Evil's splendid impotence,
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible

XXXVII

" Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin—such were mine even there ;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprise,
Or, as ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring's messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII

" So years had passed, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of ocean, and the cavern cracked
With sound, as if the world's wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wracked :
And through the cleft streamed in one cataract
The stifling waters—when I woke, the flood
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX

" Above me was the sky, beneath the sea :
I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
With splash and shock into the deep—anon
All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
I felt that I was free ! The Ocean-spray
Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
Around, and in my hair the winds did play
Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL

" My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest ; day was almost over,
When through the fading light I could discover
A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
The twilight deep ;—the Mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI

" And when they saw one sitting on a crag,
They sent a boat to me;—the Sailors rowed
In awe through many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed
The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
They came and questioned me, but when they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they stood
And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
Deep thoughts: so to the ship we passed without a word.

Canto VIII

I

" I sate beside the Steersman then, and gazing
Upon the west, cried, 'Spread the sails! Behold!
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet;—the City of Gold.
Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold;
The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars, they tremble with the cold
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea!—
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!'

II

" The Mariners obeyed—the Captain stood
Aloof, and, whispering to the Pilot, said,
'Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts: a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that!' The Pilot then replied,
'It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride,
Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside."

III

" We passed the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And as we sailed, the Mariners came near
And thronged around to listen;—in the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
May not attaint, and my calm voice did rear;
'Ye all are human—yon broad moon gives light
To millions who the selfsame likeness wear,
Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV

" 'What dream ye? Your own hands have built an home,
Even for yourselves on a belovèd shore:
For some, fond eyes are pining till they come,
How they will greet him when his toils are o'er,
And laughing babes rush from the well-known door!
Is this your care? ye toil for your own good—
Ye feel and think—has some immortal power
Such purposes? or in a human mood,
Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in solitude?

V

" 'What is that Power? Ye mock yourselves, and give
A human heart to what ye cannot know:
As if the cause of life could think and live!
'Twere as if man's own works should feel, and show
The hopes, and fears, and thoughts from which they flow,
And he be like to them! Lo! Plague is free
To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny!

VI

" 'What is that Power? Some moon-struck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown;
And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
Nursed by fear's dew of poison, grows thereon,
And that men say, that Power has chosen Death
On all who scorn its laws to wreak immortal wrath.

VII

" 'Men say that they themselves have heard and seen,
Or known from others who have known such things,
A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between
Wields an invisible rod—that Priests and Kings,
Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings
Man's freeborn soul beneath the oppressor's heel,
Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII

"'And it is said, this Power will punish wrong;
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain!
And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among,
Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain,
Which, like a plague, a burden, and a bane,
Clung to him while he lived;—for love and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say are difference vain—
The will of strength is right—this human state
Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

IX

"'Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth—and every throne
Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow, rests thereon,
One shape of many names:—for this ye plough
The barren waves of ocean, hence each one
Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow,
Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

X

"'Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade
Of power—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,
A law to which mankind has been betrayed;
And human love, is as the name well known
Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and into darkness thrown,
Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI

"'O Love, who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves!
Justice, or Truth, or Joy! those only can
From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of Freedom, though through graves
She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend's dearest blood,—

XII

" 'To feel the peace of self-contentment's lot,
To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
Until life's sunny day is quite gone down,
To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe;
To live, as if to love and live were one,—
This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

XIII

" 'But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey—one rules another,
And as one Power rules both high and low,
So man is made the captive of his brother,
And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother,
Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other,
Are darkened—Woman as the bond-slave dwells
Of man, a slave; and life is poisoned in its wells.

XIV

" 'Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
A lasting chain for his own slavery;—
In fear and restless care that he may live
He toils for others, who must ever be
The joyless thralls of like captivity;
He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin;
He builds the altar, that its idol's fee
May be his very blood; he is pursuing—
O, blind and willing wretch!—his own obscure undoing.

XV

" 'Woman!—she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home;
Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,
As calm decks the false Ocean:—well ye know
What Woman is, for none of Woman born,
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI

" 'This need not be ; ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory ;
That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
The world, like light ; and evil faith, grown hoary
With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon !—
Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII

" 'Let all be free and equal !—From your hearts
I feel an echo ; through my inmost frame
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts—
Whence come ye, friends ? Alas, I cannot name
All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
On your worn faces ; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts, I in your looks behold.

XVIII

" 'Whence come ye, friends ? from pouring human blood
Forth on the earth ? Or bring ye steel and gold,
That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude ?
Or from the famished poor, pale, weak, and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil ? Unfold !
Speak ! Are your hands in slaughter's sanguine hue
Stained freshly ? have your hearts in guile grown old ?
Know yourselves thus ! ye shall be pure as dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX

" 'Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home :
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime : the doom
Is this, which has, or may, or must become
Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb,
Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil.

XX

"'Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate,
And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name
Of misery—all are mirrors of the same;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen
Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI

"'Yes, it is Hate—that shapeless fiendly thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine,
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting;
Which, when the heart its snaky folds entwine
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine
When Amphisbaena some fair bird has tied,
Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII

"'Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine own.
It is the dark idolatry of self,
Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan;
O vacant expiation! Be at rest.—
The past is Death's, the future is thine own;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

XXIII

"'Speak thou! whence come ye?'—A Youth made reply:
'Wearily, wearily o'er the boundless deep
We sail;—thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow;
Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV

" 'Yes—I must speak—my secret should have perished
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command
Of thy keen eyes:—yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are reft, and bear o'er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV

" 'We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
Among the daughters of those mountains lone,
We drag them there, where all things best and rarest
Are stained and trampled:—years have come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
No thought;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid
On mine with light of mutual love have shone—
She is my life,—I am but as the shade
Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

XXVI

" 'For she must perish in the Tyrant's hall—
Alas, Alas!'—He ceased, and by the sail
Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,
And still before the ocean and the gale
The ship fled fast till the stars 'gan to fail,
And, round me gathered with mute countenance,
The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
With toil, the Captain with gray locks, whose glance
Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII

" 'Recede not! pause not now! Thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love—behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth
Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent Custom's tooth
May violate?—Be free! and even here,
Swear to be firm till death!' They cried 'We swear! We swear!'

XXVIII

" The very darkness shook, as with a blast
 Of subterranean thunder, at the cry;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
 Into the night, as if the sea, and sky,
 And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
 And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye
The captives gazing stood, and every one
Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

XXIX

" They were earth's purest children, young and fair,
 With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,
And brows as bright as Spring or Morning, ere
 Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
 In characters of cloud which wither not.—
The change was like a dream to them; but soon
 They knew the glory of their altered lot,
In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

XXX

" But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair,
 Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair,
 Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
 Showed that her soul was quivering; and full soon
That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look
 On her and me, as for some speechless boon:
I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

Canto IX

I

" That night we anchored in a woody bay,
 And sleep no more around us dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has passed away,
 It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
 Whose heart is now at rest: thus night passed over
In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
 Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars pranked in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II

" The joyous Mariners, and each free Maiden,
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden ;
Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those wakes that cannot cease to smile.

III

" The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh,
In fear and wonder ; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry,
Like Earth's own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty !
They heard !—As o'er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of Morning's birth :

IV

" So from that cry over the boundless hills
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano's voice, whose thunder fills
Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
A path through human hearts with stream which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark Custom's brood ;
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion poured—they called aloud
On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V

" We reached the port.—Alas ! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,
Upon the night's devouring darkness shed :
Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
Which wrap the world ; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's spasm !

VI

" I walked through the great City then, but free
From shame or fear; those toil-worn Mariners
And happy Maidens did encompass me;
And like a subterranean wind that stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
From every human soul, a murmur strange
Made as I passed: and many wept, with tears
Of joy and awe, and wingèd thoughts did range,
And half-extinguished words, which prophesied of change.

VII

" For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,—
As one who from some mountain's pyramid
Points to the unrisen sun!—the shades approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
Wisdom, the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill,
Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII

" Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave,
The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:—
Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,
The forest, and the mountain came;—some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Women from bonds and death, and on my head
The burden of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX

" But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts: the purest and the best,
As friend with friend, made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute;—the rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blessed,
Leagued with me in their hearts;—their meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations, were possessed
By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
Those hosts of meaner cares, which life's strong wings encumber.

X

" But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
Sought me : one truth their dreary prison has shaken,—
They looked around, and lo ! they became free !
Their many tyrants sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain ;
For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye,
Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain
Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI

" Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round,
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace ; and a visioned swound,
A pause of hope and awe the City bound,
Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leaped forth.

XII

" Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky,
By winds from distant regions meeting there,
In the high name of truth and liberty,
Around the City millions gathered were,
By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair,—
Words which the lore of truth in hues of fame
Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air
Like homeless odours floated, and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in flame.

XIII

" The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe'er, when force is impotent,
To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
To curse the rebels.—To their gods did they
For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

XIV

" And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell
From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
How glorious Athens in her splendour fell,
Because her sons were free,—and that among
Mankind, the many to the few belong,
By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.
They said, that age was truth, and that the young
Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.

XV

" And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse ;
There was one teacher, who necessity
Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be ;
That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
And that the will of one was peace, and we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery—

XVI

" 'For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter.'
So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied ;
Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter
Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide ;
And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,
And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue and wide,
Said, that the rule of men was over now,
And hence, the subject world to woman's will must bow ;

XVII

" And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
In vain ! the steady towers in Heaven did shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly call
Left Plague her banquet in the Ethiop's hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food : nor fear nor shame,
Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope's newly kindled flame.

XVIII

"For gold was as a god whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshippers were few
And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew
Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
Till the Priests stood alone within the fane;
The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
And the cold sneers of calumny were vain,
The union of the free with discord's brand to stain.

XIX

"The rest thou knowest.—Lo! we two are here—
We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve or fear,
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
I smile, though human love should make me weep.
We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

XX

"We know not what will come—yet Laon, dearest,
Cythna shall be the prophetess of Love,
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest
To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove
Within the homeless Future's wintry grove;
For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from steadfast truth, an unreturning stream.

XXI

"The blasts of Autumn drive the wingèd seeds
Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train;
Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her ethereal wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods she flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII

" O Spring, of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness
Wind-wingèd emblem ! brightest, best and fairest !
Whence comest thou, when, with dark Winter's sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest ?
Sister of joy, thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet ;
Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII

" Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,
Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves ?
Lo, Winter comes !—the grief of many graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith the enchanter's word,
And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred.

XXIV

" The seeds are sleeping in the soil : meanwhile
The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey,
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak ; and, day by day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
And gray Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

XXV

" This is the winter of the world ;—and here
We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
Behold ! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made
The promise of its birth,—even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
The future, a broad sunrise ; thus arrayed
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulf of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI

"O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise;
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?
Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart—it is a paradise
Which everlasting Spring has made its own,
And while drear Winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh-blown,
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII

"In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great, the good will ever find;
And though some envious shades may interlope
Between the effect and it, One comes behind,
Who aye the future to the past will bind—
Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
Evil with evil, good with good must wind
In bands of union, which no power may sever:
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

XXVIII

"The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty
To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we
Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX

"So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought
Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are; let those who come
Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

XXX

" Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live, and burn and move,
When we shall be no more ;—the world has seen
A type of peace ; and—as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
After long years, some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope, returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

XXXI

" And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
And at the altar, most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be ;—what we have done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known ;
That record shall remain, when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion ;
And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

XXXII

" The while we two, belovèd, must depart,
And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair
Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair :
These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin ; no calm sleep
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
In joy ;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep !

XXXIII

" These are blind fancies—reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive ;
There is delusion in the world—and woe,
And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live,
Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
Or even these thoughts.—Come near me ! I do weave
A chain I cannot break—I am possessed
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast.

XXXIV

" Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm—
  O ! willingly, belovèd, would these eyes,
Might they no more drink being from thy form,
  Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
  Close their faint orbs in death : I fear nor prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
  Yes, Love when Wisdom fails makes Cythna wise :
Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV

" Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters
  Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the Clouds their daughters,
  Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even,
  All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulf.—Lo ! what a change is come
  Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
Though it change all but thee ! "—She ceased—night's gloom
Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky's sunless dome.

XXXVI

Though she had ceased, her countenance uplifted
  To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright ;
Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
  The air they breathed with love, her locks undight.
  " Fair star of life and love," I cried, " my soul's delight
Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies ?
  O, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night,
Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes ! "
She turned to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise !

Canto X

I

Was there a human spirit in the steed,
  That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
He broke our linkèd rest ? or do indeed
  All living things a common nature own,
  And thought erect an universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear ?
  And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend ? and makes she bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share ?

II

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue
Which was not human—the lone nightingale
Has answered me with her most soothing song,
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sighed beneath ; from many a dale
The antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
With happy sounds, and motions, that avail
Like man's own speech ; and such was now the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

III

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence ; the blood which flowed
Over the fields, had stained the courser's feet ;
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew—then meet
The vulture, and the wild dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyaena gray, and eat
The dead in horrid truce : their throngs did make
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV

For, from the utmost realms of earth, came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons ; like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorched pastures of the South ; so bent
The armies of the leaguèd Kings around
Their files of steel and flame ;—the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their Navies' sound.

V

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men ; obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood ; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native land ;
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI

Fertile in prodigies and lies ;—so there
  Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
  His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will
  Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure ;
  But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy : those slaves impure,
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
  His countenance in lies,—even at the hour
When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe,
  With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
  With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
Of Kings and Priests, those dark conspirators,
  He called :—they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven abhors.

VIII

Myriads had come—millions were on their way ;
  The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, through the public way,
  Choked with his country's dead :—his footsteps reel
  On the fresh blood—he smiles. "Ay, now I feel
I am a King in truth !" he said, and took
  His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions ; that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX

"But first, go slay the rebels—why return
  The victor bands ?" he said, "millions yet live,
Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
  The scales of victory yet ;—let none survive
  But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
The expiation for his brethren here.—
  Go forth, and waste and kill !"—"O king, forgive
My speech," a soldier answered—"but we fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near ;

X

" For we were slaying still without remorse,
And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand
Defenceless lay, when, on a hell-black horse,
An Angel bright as day, waving a brand
Which flashed among the stars, passed."—" Dost thou stand
Parleying with me, thou wretch ? " the king replied ;
" Slaves, bind him to the wheel ; and of this band,
Whoso will drag that woman to his side
That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside ;

XI

" And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth ! "
They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar
Of their career ; the horsemen shook the earth ;
The wheeled artillery's speed the pavement tore ;
The infantry, file after file, did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
Among the wasted fields ; the sixth saw gore
Stream through the city ; on the seventh, the dew
Of slaughter became stiff, and there was peace anew :

XII

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead !
Peace in the silent streets ! save when the cries
Of victims to their fiery judgement led,
Made pale their voiceless lips who seemed to dread
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed ;
Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song !

XIII

Day after day the burning sun rolled on
Over the death-polluted land—it came
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame
The few lone ears of corn ;—the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languished and died,—the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour passed
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV

First Want, then Plague came on the beasts ; their food
Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who, from regions far away,
Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts ; gaunt and wasting now,
Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey ;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV

The fish were poisoned in the streams ; the birds
In the green woods perished ; the insect race
Was withered up ; the scattered flocks and herds
Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase
Died moaning, each upon the other's face
In helpless agony gazing ; round the City
All night, the lean hyaenas their sad case
Like starving infants wailed ; a woeful ditty !
And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI

Amid the aëreal minarets on high,
The Ethiopian vultures fluttering fell
From their long line of brethren in the sky,
Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well
These signs the coming mischief did foretell :—
Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread
Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

XVII

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare ;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
Groaned with the burden of a new despair ;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood : conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII

There was no food, the corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perished ; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown ;
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before
Those wingèd things sprang forth, were void of shade ;
The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store,
Were burned ;—so that the meanest food was weighed
With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

XIX

There was no corn—in the wide market-place
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold ;
They weighed it in small scales—and many a face
Was fixed in eager horror then : his gold
The miser brought ; the tender maid, grown bold
Through hunger, bared her scornèd charms in vain ;
The mother brought her eldest-born, controlled
By instinct blind as love, but turned again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
" O, for the sheathèd steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
With brothers' blood ! O, that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave ! "
Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture howl and rave,
Or sit, in frenzy's unimagined mood,
Upon fresh heaps of dead ; a ghastly multitude.

XXI

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame,
Which raged like poison through their bursting veins ;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains.

XXII

It was not thirst but madness! Many saw
Their own lean image everywhere, it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims; some, ere life was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, "We tread
On fire! the avenging Power his hell on earth has spread!"

XXIII

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
For life, in the hot silence of the air;
And strange 'twas, amid that hideous heap to see
Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
As if not dead, but slumbering quietly
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV

Famine had spared the palace of the king:—
He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and priests; but Plague did fling
One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
On him who brings it food, and pass, with guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier gray,
The house-dog of the throne; but many a mile
Comes Plague, a wingèd wolf, who loathes alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might
Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
Strange truths; a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI

The Princess and the Priests were pale with terror ;
That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind,
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
On their own hearts : they sought and they could find
No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind !
So, through the desolate streets to the high fane,
The many-tongued and endless armies wind
In sad procession : each among the train
To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII

"O God !" they cried, "we know our secret pride
Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name ;
Secure in human power we have defied
Thy fearful might ; we bend in fear and shame
Before thy presence ; with the dust we claim
Kindred ; be merciful, O King of Heaven !
Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

XXVIII

"O King of Glory ! thou alone hast power !
Who can resist thy will ? who can restrain
Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower
The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain ?
Greatest and best, be merciful again !
Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made
The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid
Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have weighed ?

XXIX

"Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge : recall them now ;
Thy worshippers, abased, here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow :
We swear by thee ! and to our oath do thou
Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame,
That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim."

XXX

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
The light of other minds;—troubled they passed
From the great Temple;—fiercely still and fast
The arrows of the plague among them fell,
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And through the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI

And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh,
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before, as watchwords of a single woe,
Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armèd hands, and each did howl
"Our God alone is God!"—and slaughter now
Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl
A voice came forth, which pierced like ice through every soul.

XXXII

'Twas an Iberian Priest from whom it came,
A zealous man, who led the legioned West,
With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
To quell the unbelievers; a dire guest
Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest;
He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
Even where his Idol stood; for, far and near
Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down;
Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
  Or steel, in Europe; the slow agonies
Of legal torture mocked his keen desire:
  So he made truce with those who did despise
  The expiation, and the sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed
  Might crush for him those deadlier enemies;
For fear of God did in his bosom breed
A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV

"Peace! Peace!" he cried, "when we are dead, the Day
  Of Judgement comes, and all shall surely know
Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
  The errors of his faith in endless woe!
  But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurned
  Him whom we all adore,—a subtle foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

XXXVI

"Think ye, because ye weep, and kneel, and pray,
  That God will lull the pestilence? It rose
Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day,
  His mercy soothed it to a dark repose:
  It walks upon the earth to judge his foes;
And what are thou and I, that he should deign
  To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death, ere they receive the twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

XXXVII

"Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
  Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
Their lurid eyes are on us! those who fell
  By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn,
  Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
  To make our souls their spoil. See! see! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII

" Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep :—
Pile high the pyre of expiation now,
A forest's spoil of boughs, and on the heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below
A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny !

XXXIX

" Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Linked tight with burning brass, perish !—then pray
That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
Of Heaven may be appeased." He ceased, and they
A space stood silent, as far, far away
The echoes of his voice among them died ;
And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

XL

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell ; and as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And Heaven above seemed cloven, were, on a throne
Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone
Their King and Judge—fear killed in every breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before, and with an inward fire possessed,
They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest.

XLI

'Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming through the living and the dead,
" The Monarch saith, that his great Empire's worth
Is set on Laon and Laone's head :
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom's heir, a glorious meed !
But he who both alive can hither bring,
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King."

XLII

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below;
It overtopped the towers that did environ
That spacious square; for Fear is never slow
To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe,
So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gadflies, they have piled the heath, and gums, and wood.

XLIII

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation;
And in the silence of that expectation,
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
It was so deep—save when the devastation
Of the swift pest, with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

XLIV

Morn came,—among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine still
Heaved corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks; in silence, still
The pale survivors stood; ere noon, the fear
Of Hell became a panic, which did kill
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
As "Hush! hark! Come they yet? Just Heaven! thine hour is near!"

XLV

And Priests rushed through their ranks, some counterfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
With their own lies; they said their god was waiting
To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need
Of human souls:—three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed through the wide City, where, with speed,
Men brought their infidel kindred to appease
God's wrath, and while they burned, knelt round on quivering knees.

XLVI

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke,
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes gray
The madness which these rites had lulled, awoke
Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
In balance just the good and evil there?
He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where
Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

XLVII

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then,
To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
And laughed, and died; and that unholy men,
Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
Looked from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
The visible floor of Heaven, and it was she!
And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
Came to the fire, and said, "Stop, I am he!
Kill me!"—They burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came,
Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame
Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty;
And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan
Like love, and died; and then that they did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

Canto XI

I

She saw me not—she heard me not—alone
Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown
Over her look, the shadow of a mood
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth;—she stood alone,
Above, the Heavens were spread;—below, the flood
Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown
Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.

II

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains
  Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Gray mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
  Of darkness in the North :—the day was dying :—
  Sudden, the sun shone forth, its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
  And on the shattered vapours, which defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
  On either side by the cloud's cleft was made ;
And where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
  Its waves gushed forth like fire, and as if swayed
  By some mute tempest, rolled on *her* ; the shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
  Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver ;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
  She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth ;
Rapture, and love, and admiration wrought
  A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth,
  Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy ; which with the speechless feeling
  That led her there united, and shot forth
From her far eyes a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

V

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
  Was now heard there ;—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
  Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
  Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies,
Burst from her looks and gestures ;—and a light
  Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise
From her whole frame, an atmosphere which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole;—she would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head;
I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet;
Her eyes mingling with mine, might soon have fed
My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet
I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet!

VII

Never but once to meet on Earth again!
She heard me as I fled—her eager tone
Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
"I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly?
My steps are faint—Come back, thou dearest one—
Return, ah me! return!"—The wind passed by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII

Woe! Woe! that moonless midnight!—Want and Pest
Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest
Eminent among those victims—even the Fear
Of Hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere
Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
By his own rage upon his burning bier
Of circling coals of fire; but still there clung
One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:

IX

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,
For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep,
But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous surge.

x

Each of that multitude, alone, and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tossed
Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through;
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there flew
One murmur on the wind, or if some word
Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

XI

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death,
Paler from hope? they had sustained despair.
Why watched those myriads with suspended breath
Sleepless a second night? they are not here,
The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead;
And even in death their lips are wreathed with fear.—
The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
Silent Arcturus shines—"Ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII

"Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream,
Of triumph not to be contained? See! hark!
They come, they come! give way!" Alas, ye deem
Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark
Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark,
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark
From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII

And many, from the crowd collected there,
Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
There was the silence of a long despair,
When the last echo of those terrible cries
Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fixed; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
  With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
Concealed his face ; but, when he spake, his tone,
  Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,—
  Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
Void of all hate or terror—made them start ;
  For as with gentle accents he addressed
His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

XV

" Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
  Amid the ruin which yourselves have made,
Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
  And sprang from sleep !—dark Terror has obeyed
  Your bidding—O, that I whom ye have made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
  From pain and fear ! but evil casts a shade,
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

XVI

" Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress ;
  Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
  Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
  Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To blind your slaves :—consider your own thought,
  An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII

" Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day !
  Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
  For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
  Severe taskmistress ! ye your hearts have sold.
Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
  No evil dreams : all mortal things are cold
And senseless then ; if aught survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII

" Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
O, could I win your ears to dare be now
Glorious, and great, and calm ! that ye would cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple, and gold, and steel ! that ye would go
Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow ;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame !

XIX

" If thus, 'tis well—if not, I come to say
That Laon—" while the Stranger spoke, among
The Council sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young,
Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
Like bees on mountain flowers ; they knew the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication sprung ;
The men of faith and law then without ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

XX

They stabbed them in the back and sneered—a slave
Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave ;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the Stranger. " What hast thou to do
With me, poor wretch ? "—Calm, solemn, and severe,
That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear,
Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

XXI

" It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and gray,
And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapped in clay :
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon's friend,
And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend !
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII

" There is a People mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
Are worshipped ; from a glorious Mother's breast,
Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom's fullest flow.

XXIII

" That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapped in gloom ;
An epitaph of glory for the tomb
Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
Great People ! as the sands shalt thou become ;
Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade ;
The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV

" Yes, in the desert there is built a home
For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
The monuments of man beneath the dome
Of a new Heaven ; myriads assemble there,
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
Drive from their wasted homes : the boon I pray
Is this—that Cythna shall be convoyed there—
Nay, start not at the name—America !
And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV

" With me do what you will. I am your foe ! "
The light of such a joy as makes the stare
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,
Shone in a hundred human eyes—" Where, where
Is Laon ? Haste ! fly ! drag him swiftly here !
We grant thy boon."—" I put no trust in ye,
Swear by the Power ye dread."—" We swear, we swear ! "
The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
And smiled in gentle pride, and said, Lo ! I am he ! "

Canto XII

I

The transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the winds of fear; from his dull madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
And filled the startled Earth with echoes: morn did ope

II

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
Of guards in golden arms, and Priests beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
A Shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
Laon,—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around;
There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek
Resolve has not turned pale,—his eyes are mild
And calm, and, like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw
Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide
Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round: the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V

And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile
In expectation, but one child: the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around: each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near,
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI

There was such silence through the host, as when
An earthquake trampling on some populous town,
Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
Expect the second; all were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
Stood up before the King, without avail,
Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
Was heard—she trembled like one aspen pale
Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII

What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun,
Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath?—The signal-gun
Roared—hark, again! In that dread pause he lay
As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey—
A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last
Bursts on that awful silence; far away,
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
Bursts through their ranks: a woman sits thereon,
Fairer, it seems, than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering gone.

IX

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave;
The Tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,—
Her innocence his child from fear did save;
Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood,
And, like the refluence of a mighty wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic, fled in terror's altered mood.

X

They pause, they blush, they gaze,—a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
Of a tempestuous sea:—that sudden rout
One checked, who, never in his mildest dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice—but he misdeems
That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self—thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed,

XI

And others too, thought he was wise to see,
In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine;
In love and beauty, no divinity.—
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—"Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? Heaven has sent its other victim here."

XII

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to break
Our holy oath?"—"Impious to keep it, say!"
Shrieked the exulting Priest—"Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burden lay
Of her just torments:—at the Judgement Day
Will I stand up before the golden throne
Of Heaven, and cry, 'To thee did I betray
An Infidel; but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy! the glory be thine own!'"

XIII

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
  Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
  Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among
  Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.
  A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now.

XIV

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear
  From many a tremulous eye, but like soft dews
Which feed Spring's earliest buds, hung gathered there,
  Frozen by doubt,—alas! they could not choose
  But weep; for when her faint limbs did refuse
To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled;
  And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

XV

She won them, though unwilling, her to bind
  Near me, among the snakes. When there had fled
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind,
  She smiled on me, and nothing then we said,
  But each upon the other's countenance fed
Looks of insatiate love; the mighty veil
  Which doth divide the living and the dead
Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,—
All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.—

XVI

Yet—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
  Of dying flames, the stainless air around
Hung silent and serene—a blood-red gleam
  Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
  The globèd smoke,—I heard the mighty sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean;
  And through its chasms I saw, as in a swound,
The tyrant's child fall without life or motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.

XVII

And is this death ?—The pyre has disappeared,
The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng ;
The flames grow silent—slowly there is heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which, like the kiss of love when life is young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep ;
With ever-changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Wakened me then ; lo ! Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind
Breathed divine odour ; high above, was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

XIX

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain
With incense-bearing forests, and vast caves
Of marble radiance, to that mighty fountain ;
And where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which, from the depths whose jaggèd caverns breed
Their unreposing strife, if lifts and heaves,—
Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel—a wingèd shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
That as her bark did through the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams ; from side to side,
While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide.

XXI

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within ; the prow and stern did curl
Hornèd on high, like the young moon supine,
When o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine,
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple line
Fade fast, till borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet ;—
Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
Glanced as she spake : "Ay, this is Paradise
And not a dream, and we are all united !
Lo, that is mine own child, who in the guise
Of madness came, like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods : my heart is now too well requited !"

XXIII

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair
Than her own human hues and living charms ;
Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight ;
The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapped from sight
The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV

Then the bright child, the plumèd Seraph came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said, "I was disturbed by tremulous shame
When once we met, yet knew that I was thine
From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear—again
We meet ; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV

"When the consuming flames had wrapped ye round,
The hope which I had cherished went away;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say,
"They wait for thee, belovèd!"—then I knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI

"It was the calm of love—for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre
In its own gray and shrunken ashes lying;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers, like night; beneath whose shade
Awed by the ending of their own desire
The armies stood; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismayed.

XXVII

"The frightful silence of that altered mood,
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said—'The flood of time is rolling on,
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream.
Have ye done well? They moulder flesh and bone,
Who might have made this life's envenomed dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII

"'These perish as the good and great of yore
Have perished, and their murderers will repent,—
Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
Yon smoke has faded from the firmament
Even for this cause, that ye who must lament
The death of those that made this world so fair,
Cannot recall them now; but there is lent
To man the wisdom of a high despair,
When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX

"'Ay, ye may fear not now the Pestilence,
From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn;
All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
In pain and fire have unbelievers gone;
And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
In secret, to his home each one returning,
And to long ages shall this hour be known;
And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX

"'For me the world is grown too void and cold,
Since Hope pursues immortal Destiny
With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die;
Tell to your children this!' Then suddenly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart and fell;
My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
There came a murmur from the crowd, to tell
Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI

"Then suddenly I stood, a wingèd Thought,
Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought
The strength of its dominion, good and great,
The better Genius of this world's estate.
His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
Where I am sent to lead!" These wingèd words she said,

XXXII

And with the silence of her eloquent smile,
Bade us embark in her divine canoe;
Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue
Into the winds' invisible stream she threw,
Sitting beside the prow: like gossamer
On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
Whose shores receded fast, whilst we seemed lingering there;

XXXIII

Till down that mighty stream, dark, calm, and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet
As swift as twinkling beams, had, under Heaven,
From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven,
The boat fled visibly—three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud through morn, and noon, and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
When the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold
Its whirlpools where all hues did spread and quiver;
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river,
Or when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man,
Which flieth forth and cannot make abode;
Sometimes through forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crowned
With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

XXXVI

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows,
Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass; sometimes beneath the night
Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
And dark-green chasms, shades beautiful and white,
Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII

And ever as we sailed, our minds were full
Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
In converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful,
And in quick smiles whose light would come and go
Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress—
For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know,
That virtue, though obscured on Earth, not less
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling
Number delightful hours—for through the sky
The spherèd lamps of day and night, revealing
New changes and new glories, rolled on high,
Sun, Moon, and moonlike lamps, the progeny
Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair:
On the fourth day, wild as a windwrought sea
The stream became, and fast and faster bare
The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX

Steady and swift, where the waves rolled like mountains
Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour
Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,
Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
Securely fled, that rapid stress before,
Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild,
Wreathed in the silver mist: in joy and pride we smiled.

XL

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is passed, and our aëreal speed suspended.
We look behind: a golden mist did quiver
Where its wild surges with the lake were blended,—
Our bark hung there as on a line suspended
Between two heavens,—that windless waveless lake
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed; from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

XLI

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle,
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The temple of the Spirit; on the sound.
Which issued thence, drawn nearer and more near,
Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
The charmèd boat approached, and there its haven found.

Drama

1818–1822

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

[Written 1818-1819. Publ. 1820.]

A LYRICAL DRAMA

IN FOUR ACTS

AUDISNE HAEC, AMPHIARAE, SUB TERRAM ABDITE?

PREFACE

The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of

mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my com-

position, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectul condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions

of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them: one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study, but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Aeschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms "a passion for reforming the world:" what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined

imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROMETHEUS.	APOLLO.		HERCULES.
DEMOGORGON.	MERCURY.		THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
JUPITER.	ASIA	Oceanides.	THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
THE EARTH.	PANTHEA	Oceanides.	THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
OCEAN.	IONE	Oceanides.	SPIRIT OF THE HOURS.

SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS. FURIES.

ACT I

SCENE.—*A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTHEA *and* IONE *are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.*

Prometheus. Monarch of Gods and Dæmons, and all
Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,

And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hadst thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire,
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing chrystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom

—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

First Voice (from the Mountains)

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

Second Voice (from the Springs)

Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Thro' a city and a solitude.

Third Voice (from the Air)

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

Fourth Voice (from the Whirlwinds)

We had soared beneath these mountains
  Unresting ages; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
  Nor any power above or under
  Ever made us mute with wonder.

First Voice

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

Second Voice

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, 'Ah, woe is me!'
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

Third Voice

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven:
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

Fourth Voice

And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is as hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, "Misery!" then: the hollow Heaven replied,
"Misery!" And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, "Misery!"
Prometheus. I heard a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony

The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

The Earth. They dare not.

Prometheus. Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near,
And love. How cursed I him?

The Earth. How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

Prometheus. Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.

The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good, and though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

Prometheus. Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

The Earth. No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

Prometheus. And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice?

The Earth. I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree

Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us: their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled:
When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

Prometheus Venerable mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

The Earth. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit

The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply: so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.
Prometheus. Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

Ione

My wings are folded o'er mine ears:
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes:
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds;
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds!
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake.

Panthea

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud

His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

Phantasm of Jupiter. Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?
Prometheus. Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.
The Earth. Listen! And though your echoes must be mute,
Gray mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.
Phantasm. A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.
Panthea. See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.
Ione. He speaks! O shelter me!
Prometheus. I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak: Oh, speak!

Phantasm

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Ay, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.

Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony,
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally;
And after many a false and fruitless crime
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time.

Prometheus. Were these my words, O Parent?
The Earth. They were thine.
Prometheus. It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

The Earth

Misery, Oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer thee.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquishèd.

First Echo

Lies fallen and vanquishèd!

Second Echo

Fallen and vanquishèd!

Ione

Fear not: 'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

Panthea. 'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

Ione

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

Panthea

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

Ione

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

Panthea

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

First Fury. Ha! I scent life!
Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes!
Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.
First Fury. Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon

Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent?
Mercury. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimaera, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.
First Fury. Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!
Mercury. Crouch then in silence.
Awful sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the Abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.
Prometheus. Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here

Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The chrystal wingèd snow cling round my hair:
Whilst my belovèd race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense: 'tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude:
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try:
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour: fear delay:
Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.
Mercury. Oh, that we might be spared: I to inflict
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?
Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come.
Mercury. Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?
Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign: nor more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.
Mercury. Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless;
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

Prometheus. Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.
Mercury. If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while
Lapped in voluptuous joy?
Prometheus. I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.
Mercury. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.
Prometheus. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned: how vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.
Ione. O, sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!
Mercury. I must obey his words and thine: alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!
Panthea. See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.
Ione. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die: they come: they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.
First Fury. Prometheus!
Second Fury. Immortal Titan!
Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves!
Prometheus. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.
First Fury. We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.
Prometheus. Oh! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

Second Fury. We knew not that: Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!
Prometheus. Can aught exult in its deformity?
Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aerial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.
Prometheus. I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.
First Fury. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?
Prometheus. Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.
Second Fury. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?
Prometheus. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.
Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men:
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony?
Prometheus. Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

Chorus of Furies

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come!
Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,

And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;
Come, come, come!
Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning:
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning·
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel:
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted
To the maniac dreamer; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
Is he with fear.
Come, come, come!
We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

Panthea. These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

First Fury

Your call was as a wingèd car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapt us from red gulphs of war,

Second Fury

From wide cities, famine-wasted;

Third Fury

Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

Fourth Fury

Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

Fifth Fury

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A Fury

Speak not: whisper not:
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A Fury

Tear the veil!

Another Fury

It is torn.

Chorus

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Hark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled:
Look again, the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

Semichorus I

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.

Grant a little respite now:
See a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legioned band of linkèd brothers
Whom Love calls children—

Semichorus II

'Tis another's:
See how kindred murder kin:
'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
Till Despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.
[*All the* FURIES *vanish*, *except one.*

Ione. Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?
Panthea. Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.
Ione. What didst thou see?
Panthea. A woeful sight: a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.
Ione. What next?
Panthea. The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth: those groans are grief enough.
Fury. Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.
Prometheus. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood: it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,

It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home;
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells:
Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.
Fury. Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.
Prometheus. Worse?
Fury. In each human heart terror survives
The ruin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.
Prometheus. Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.
Fury. Thou pitiest them? I speak no more! [*Vanishes.*
Prometheus. Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illuminèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives

When they shall be no types of things which are.
Panthea. Alas! what sawest thou more?
Prometheus. There are two woes:
To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.
The Earth. I felt thy torture, son: with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding ether: they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!
Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!
Ione. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And, hark! Is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?
Panthea. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

Chorus of Spirits

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought;
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,

As the thoughts of man's own mind
  Float through all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

Ione. More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

First Spirit

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded through the sky;
And one sound, above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

Second Spirit

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between, with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half:
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh:
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

Third Spirit

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And a lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a dream with plumes of flame,
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe ;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade, its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet :
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

Fourth Spirit

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept ;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aërial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be :
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality !
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succour thee.

Ione

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come, as two doves to one belovèd nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And, hark ! their sweet, sad voices ! 'tis despair
Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

Panthea. Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.
Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,

Orange and azure deepening into gold:
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

Chorus of Spirits

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

Fifth Spirit

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I passed 'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind: great sages bound in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unupbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of sadness,
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

Sixth Spirit

Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with lulling footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aërial joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

Chorus

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and wingèd steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

Prometheus. Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

Chorus

In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From Spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

Ione. Where are the Spirits fled?
Panthea. Only a sense
Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.
Prometheus. How fair these air-born shapes! and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulph of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.
Panthea. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?
Prometheus. I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.
Panthea. Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;

But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

Act II

Scene I.—*Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.*
Asia *alone.*

Asia. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended:
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose: thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains: through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers: hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn? [Panthea *enters.*
I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.

Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.
Panthea. Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noon-tide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.
Asia. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.
Panthea. As I have said
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
"Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me."
I lifted them: the overpowering light

Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm ether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; though still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:
"Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
I always knew what I desired before,
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
And mingled it with thine: for when just now
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
Quivered between our intertwining arms."
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

Panthea. I lift them though they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue boundless heaven

Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.
Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?
Asia. There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build o'er the waste world? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
For through its grey robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.
Dream. Follow! Follow!
Panthea. It is mine other dream.
Asia. It disappears.
Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost:
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!
Asia. As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among these lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
And the white dew on the new bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently;
And there was more which I remember not:
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW! as they vanished by;
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire;

A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
And then I said: "Panthea, look on me."
But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

Echo. Follow, follow!

Panthea. The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices
As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list!

Echoes (unseen)

Echoes we: listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

Panthea. I hear.

Echoes

O, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Through the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth;

(*More distant*)

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.

Panthea. List! the strain floats nearer now.

Echoes

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy steps alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

Echoes

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noon-tide dew;
By the forest, lakes, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and gulphs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA *pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock listening.*

Semichorus I. of Spirits

The path through which that lovely twain
Have past, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew;

And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone:
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

Semichorus II

There the voluptuous nightingales,
  Are awake through all the broad noon-day.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
    And through the windless ivy-boughs,
  Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom,
    Watching to catch the languid close
  Of the last strain, then lifts on high
  The wings of the weak melody,
'Till some new strain of feeling bear
  The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
  Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

Semichorus I

There those enchanted eddies play
  Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
  By Demogorgon's mighty law,
  With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;
  As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw:
  And first there comes a gentle sound
  To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion,—
Attracts, impels them; those who saw

Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey:
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell·
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well divine.
But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth

One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.—*A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.*
ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift,
Like Maenads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
The voice which is contagion to the world.
Asia. Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth: Wonderful!
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain:
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving, in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,

Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.
Panthea. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.
Asia. The fragments of the cloud are scattered up;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
Grows dizzy; see'st thou shapes within the mist
Panthea. A countenance with beckoning smiles: there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks:
Another and another: hark! they speak!

Song of Spirits

To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

While the sound whirls around,
Down, down!
As the fawn draws the hound,
As the lightning the vapour,
As a weak moth the taper;
Death, despair; love, sorrow:
Time both; to-day, to-morrow;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down!

Through the gray, void abysm,
Down, down!
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not

The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is One pervading, One alone,
Down, down!

In the depth of the deep,
Down, down!
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!
With the bright form beside thee;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV.—*The Cave of* DEMOGORGON. ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

Panthea. What veilèd form sits on that ebon throne?
Asia. The veil has fallen.
Panthea. I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun.
—Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.
Demogorgon. Ask what thou wouldst know.
Asia. What canst thou tell?
Demogorgon. All things thou dar'st demand.
Asia. Who made the living world?
Demogorgon. God.
Asia. Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

Demogorgon. God: Almighty God.
Asia. Who made that sense which, when the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?
Demogorgon. Merciful God.
Asia. And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things,
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. I feel, I know it: who?
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthrights of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;

And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself fourth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,

The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, aye, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

Asia. Whom calledst thou God?

Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia. Who is the master of the slave?

Demogorgon. If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. . . . But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As mine own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgon. Behold!

Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.

Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia. A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulph.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!

Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

Asia. What meanest thou?

Panthea. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!

Asia. Thus I am answered: strange!

Panthea. See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope;
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

Spirit

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon;

Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

Scene V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the top of a snowy Mountain.* Asia, Panthea, *and the* Spirit of the Hour.

Spirit

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.
Spirit. Alas! it could not.
Panthea. Oh Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills this cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.
Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.
Panthea. Yes, I feel—
Asia. What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.
Panthea. How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,

Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee? List! [*Music.*

Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

Panthea. List! Spirits speak.

Voice in the Air, singing

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

Asia

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have pass'd Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the grassy gulphs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

Act III

Scene I.—*Heaven.* Jupiter *on his Throne;* Thetis *and the other Deities assembled.*

Jupiter. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear;
And though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
It climbs the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idaean Ganymede,
And let it fill the Daedal cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.
And thou
Ascend beside me, veilèd in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright image of eternity!
When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!

God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations": even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[*The Car of the* HOUR *arrives.* DEMOGORGON *descends, and moves towards the Throne of* JUPITER.

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

Jupiter. Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,

And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.
Ai! Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.—*The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.* OCEAN *is discovered reclining near the Shore;* APOLLO *stands beside him.*

Ocean. He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?
Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.
Ocean. He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?
Apollo. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aerial ice clings over it.
Ocean. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstain'd with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating bark of the light-laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans
And desolation, and the mingled voice

Of slavery and command; but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.

Ocean. Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell:
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.

[*A sound of waves is heard.*

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.

Apollo. Farewell.

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, *and* PANTHEA, *borne in the Car with the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR. HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

Hercules. Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

Prometheus. Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veinèd emerald, and a fountain

Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change.
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our exhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions,—dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality—
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these

Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind.
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall:
Such virtue has the cave and place around.
[*Turning to the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.
For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.
Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell;
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?
Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.
Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On the whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.

And thou, O, Mother Earth!—
The Earth. I hear, I feel;
Thy lips are on me, and their touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And through my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,

Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose:
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, "Leave me not again."
Asia. Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die?
The Earth. It would avail not to reply:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life:
They sleep, and it is lifted: and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, aye, even
The crag-built desarts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
And through their veinèd leaves and amber stems

The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew
The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!

[*A* SPIRIT *rises in the likeness of a winged child.*

This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Maenad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,
The image of a temple, built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous with most living imagery,
Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV.—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Ione. Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams

Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass!
Knowest thou it?

Panthea. It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw; and called her—
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I—
Mother, dear mother.

The Spirit of the Earth (*running to Asia*). Mother, dearest mother;
May I then talk with thee as I was wont?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied: speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
And happier too; happier and wiser both.
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,

Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee),
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain
Past floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they past seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? Yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue:
All things had put their evil nature off:
I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky;
So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon

Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What; as Asia loves Prometheus?

Asia. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

Asia. Listen; look!

[*The* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR *enters.*

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe:
Dizzy as with delight I floated down.
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire;
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne,—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said, I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss

To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon ye who enter here";
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,

The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors: mouldering round,
These imaged to the pride of kings and priests
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,—
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world;
And with the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines:
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
Passionless?——no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A Part of the Forest near the Cave of* PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA *and* IONE *are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

Voice of unseen Spirits

The pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year!
Sceptres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

Ione

What dark forms were they?

Panthea

The past Hours weak and grey,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

Ione

Have they passed?

Panthea

They have passed;
They outspeeded the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled:

Ione

Whither, oh, whither?

Panthea

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen Spirits

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

Ione. What charioteers are these?
Panthea. Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of Hours

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep

Which covered our being and darkened our birth
  In the deep.

A Voice

In the deep?

Semichorus II

Oh, below the deep.

Semichorus I

An hundred ages we had been kept
  Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
  Found the truth—

Semichorus II

Worse than his visions were!

Semichorus I

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
  We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

Semichorus II

As the billows leap in the morning beams!

Chorus

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
  Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
  To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
  Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
  Through the nightly dells of the desart year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
  Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
  Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A Voice

Unite!

Panthea. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapt in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of Spirits

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

Chorus of Hours

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veilèd not?

Chorus of Spirits

We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind,
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss.
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her syren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews her Daedal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;

We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of Spirits and Hours

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

Chorus of Spirits

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize:
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death.
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;

We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of Hours

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain.

Semichorus I

We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

Semichorus II

Us the enchantments of earth retain:

Semichorus I

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

Semichorus II

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Semichorus I

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

Semichorus II

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of Hours and Spirits

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthea. Ha! they are gone!
Ione. Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?

Panthea. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!
Ione. Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?
Panthea. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.
Ione. Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes.
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.
Panthea. But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles.
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air.
Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing light into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk aery veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold.
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,

Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of etherial pearl,
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jaggèd clouds out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, wfth loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
Solid as chrystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning.
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil.
On its own folded winds, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,

And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.
Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony,
Panthea. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightenings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
Infinite mines of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of death destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
The jaggèd alligator, and the might

Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapt deluge round it like a cloke, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, past, and cried,
"Be not!" And like my words they were no more.

The Earth

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

The Earth

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the desarts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending,—

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,

My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire,
  My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
  Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire:

  How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
  By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desart-troop, a little drop for all;
  And from beneath, around, within, above,
  Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

The Moon

  The snow upon my lifeless mountains
  Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
  A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
  It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
          On mine, on mine!

  Gazing on thee I feel, I know
  Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move:
  Music is in the sea and air,
  Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
          'Tis love, all love!

The Earth

  It interpenetrates my granite mass,
  Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
  Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
  It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

  And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
  With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
  With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
  Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move:

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful though love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

The Moon

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

The Earth

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst—

The Moon

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

The Earth

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heaven's dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

The Moon

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy chrystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Maenad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmaean forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a grey and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst

Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow—

The Earth

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy chrystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.
Panthea. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.
Ione. Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.
Panthea. Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.
Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.
Panthea. An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

Demogorgon

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:

The Earth

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
Whilst each to men, and beast, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

The Moon

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

Demogorgon

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods,
Aetherial Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A Voice from above

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

Demogorgon

Ye happy Dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A Voice from beneath

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A confused Voice

We hear: thy words waken oblivion.

Demogorgon

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:—

A Voice

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon

Man who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

All

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism.
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

CANCELLED FRAGMENTS OF PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

[Publ. 1903.]

Act I

When thou descendst each night with open eyes
In torture, for a tyrant seldom sleeps,
Thou never; . . . .
. . . . . .
Which thou henceforth art doomed to interweave
. . . . . .
[Of Hell:] I placed it in his choice to be
The crown, or trampled refuse of the world
With but one law itself a glorious boon—
I gave—
. . . . . .

(see p. 167)

Second Spirit

I leaped on the wings of the Earth-star damp
As it rose on the steam of a slaughtered camp—
The sleeping newt heard not our tramp
As swift as the wings of fire may pass—
We threaded the points of long thick grass
Which hide the green pools of the morass
But shook a water-serpent's couch
In a cleft skull, of many such
The widest; at the meteor's touch
The snake did seem to see in dream
Thrones and dungeons overthrown
Visions how unlike his own . . .
'Twas the hope the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee
. . . . . .

Act II, Sc. i

Lift up thine eyes Panthea—they pierce they burn!

Panthea

Alas! I am consumed—I melt away
The fire is in my heart—

Asia

Thine eyes burn, burn!—
Hide them within thine hair—

Panthea

O quench thy lips.
I sink, I perish.

THE CENCI

A Tragedy in Five Acts

[Comp. May-Aug. 1819. Publ. 1820.]

DEDICATION TO LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

My dear Friend—I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent, and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners I never knew: and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you! Your affectionate friend,

Percy B. Shelley.

Rome, *May* 29, 1819.

PREFACE

A Manuscript was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci

Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city, during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns: the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.* Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs and a passionate exculpation

* The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

of the horrible deed to which they urged her who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained as I imagined but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, *King Lear* and the two plays in which the tale of Œdipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous; anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance and a resolution to convert the injurer

from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character. The few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge,—that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check.

Cenci himself built a chapel in the Court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation: and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.*

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects, I have written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments

* An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* of Calderon; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art: it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features; she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another: her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open-work. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further

information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.
GIACOMO, BERNARDO, } *his Sons.*
CARDINAL CAMILLO.
PRINCE COLONNA.
ORSINO, *a Prelate.*
SAVELLA, *the Pope's Legate.*
OLIMPIO, MARZIO, } *Assassins.*
ANDREA, *Servant to Cenci.*
Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

LUCRETIA, *Wife of* CENCI, *and Step-mother of his children.*
BEATRICE, *his Daughter.*

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace*

Enter COUNT CENCI, *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point; he said that you
Brought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live;
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.
Cenci. The third of my possessions—let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle.
I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge,

Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:—it angers me!
Respited me from Hell! So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven! No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the Saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Camillo. Oh, Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honourably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow white and venerable hairs!—
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth,
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanished not; I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you in dishonoured age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian. Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter—
He was accustomed to frequent my house;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
I think they never saw him any more.

Camillo. Thou execrable man, beware !—
Cenci. Of thee ?
Nay this is idle :—We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart—
For you give out that you have half reformed me;
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent,
If fear should not ; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury ;
All men enjoy revenge ; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel—
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish—and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know—
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.
Camillo. Art thou not
Most miserable ?
Cenci. Why, miserable ?
No. I am what your theologians call
Hardened ; which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought ;—
While lust was sweeter than revenge ; and now
Invention palls :—Ay, we must all grow old—
And but that there remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine—I'd do—I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure ; and I fed on honey sweets :
Men, by St. Thomas ! cannot live like bees,
And I grew tired ; yet, till I killed a foe,

And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,—
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals,
The dry, fixed eyeball—the pale, quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer that the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

Camillo. Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me;
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA

Andrea. My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

Cenci. Bid him attend me in
The grand saloon. [*Exit* ANDREA.

Camillo. Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee. [*Exit* CAMILLO.

Cenci. The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons,
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off,
And meaning, if I could, to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned. Then, as to Beatrice—
[*Looking around him suspiciously.*
I think they cannot hear me at that door;
What if they should? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! Thou pavement which I tread
Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
But not of my intent!—Andrea!

Enter Andrea

Andrea. My lord?
Cenci. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening:—no, at midnight and alone. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.—*A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter* Beatrice *and* Orsino, *as in conversation*

Beatrice. Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress; two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.
Orsino. You said you loved me then.
Beatrice. You are a Priest,
Speak to me not of love.
Orsino. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?
Beatrice. As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation, I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.

Ah, no! forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Sterner than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forebode,—but what can they forebode
Worse than I now endure?

Orsino. All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice;
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatrice. Your zeal for all I wish;—Ah me, you are cold!
Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . (*aside*) Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend! [*To* ORSINO.
This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees:
Great God! that such a father should be mine!
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale Mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! She expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition;
Till when—farewell.

Orsino. Farewell. (*Exit* BEATRICE.) I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration:—
Old men are testy, and will have their way;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,

And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me, nerve by nerve,
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no! A friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope:—
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet. Enter* CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, PRINCE COLONNA, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

Cenci. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honours our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And in my absence from your merry meetings
An evil word is gone abroad of me;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.
First Guest. In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
(*To his Companion.*) I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!
Second Guest. Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.

Cenci. It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard—
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment,—
Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

Beatrice (*to* LUCRETIA). Great God! How horrible! Some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

Lucretia. Fear not, Child,
He speaks too frankly.

Beatrice. Ah! My blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

Cenci. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God!
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead!—Why, dead!—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead;
And they will need no food or raiment more;
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad.

[LUCRETIA *sinks, half fainting;* BEATRICE *supports her.*

Beatrice. It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true—there is a God in heaven—
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

Cenci. Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth;
And whose most favouring Providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,

When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy;
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[*The Assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*

First Guest. Oh, horrible! I will depart—

Second Guest. And I.—

Third Guest. No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; though, faith!
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado;
'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

Cenci (*filling a bowl of wine and lifting it up*). Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendour leaps
And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
Under the lamplight, as my spirits do,
To hear the death of my accursèd sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A Guest (*rising*). Thou wretch!
Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?

Camillo. For God's sake,
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane.
Some ill will come of this.

Second Guest. Seize, silence him!

First Guest. I will!

Third Guest. And I!

Cenci (*addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture*).
Who moves? Who speaks? (*turning to the Company*)
'tis nothing,
Enjoy yourselves.—Beware! For my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[*The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.*

Beatrice. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What, although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
O think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! O think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love and tears
To soften him, and when this could not be
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights,
And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard
I have still borne,—until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain;
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary;
Take us away!

Cenci. (*He has been conversing with* CAMILLO *during the first part of* BEATRICE'S *speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.*) I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear

To this wild girl.

Beatrice (*not noticing the words of Cenci*). Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
O God! That I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

Camillo. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?

Colonna. Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy;
Yet I would second any one.

A Cardinal. And I.

Cenci. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

Beatrice. Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience,
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill. Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step;
Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

Cenci. My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.
Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
Another time.— [*Exeunt all but* CENCI *and* BEATRICE.
My brain is swimming round;
Give me a bowl of wine! [*To* BEATRICE.
Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight! [*Exit* BEATRICE.
Here, Andrea,

Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening; but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.
[*Drinking the wine.*
Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well;
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear! [*Exit.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

Act II

Scene I. — *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter* Lucretia *and* Bernardo.

Lucretia. Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God, Almighty, do Thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only Thee!
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.
Bernardo. O more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep!
Lucretia. Alas! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Enter Beatrice.

Beatrice (*in a hurried voice*). Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah, no! that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost Thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face ·

He frowns on others but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant

Almighty God, how merciful Thou art!
'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news?
Servant. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened. [*Giving a paper.*
And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again?
Lucretia. At the Ave Mary. [*Exit Servant.*
So, daughter, our last hope has failed. Ah me!
How pale you look; you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were over strong for you:
Your eyes have a chill glare; O, dearest child!
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.
Beatrice. You see I am not mad; I speak to you.
Lucretia. You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, "My sons are dead!"
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus have you ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence; your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence:
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?
Beatrice. What is that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody;
Yet never—Oh! Before worse come of it
'Twere wise to die; it ends in that at last.
Lucretia. Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?

He stayed not after that accursèd feast
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

Bernardo. Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

Beatrice (*speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*). It
was one word, Mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. (*Wildly.*) Oh! He has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired—but now!
What could I say? [*Recovering herself.*
Ah, no! 'tis nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild;
He only struck and cursed me as he passed;
He said, he looked, he did,—nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty;
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucretia. Nay, Beatrice; have courage, my sweet girl,
If any one despairs it should be I,
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

Beatrice. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead Mother plead against my soul
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love!

Bernardo. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,

With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, Mother!
Lucretia. My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, *suddenly*

Cenci. What, Beatrice here!
Come hither! [*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*
Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.
Beatrice (*wildly staggering towards the door*). O that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!
Cenci. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you—from this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,
[*To* BERNARDO.
Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!
[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* BERNARDO.
(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful.—'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive;
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in . . .
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!
Lucretia (*advancing timidly towards him*). Oh husband! Pray forgive poor Beatrice.
She meant not any ill.
Cenci. Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off:

Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.
You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses?—This failing,
How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And He had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of His degree enregistered in Heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?

Lucretia. So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!

Cenci. If you dare speak that wicked lie again
I'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

Lucretia. Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

Cenci. Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you;
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things—not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out; you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella:
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey! [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes:
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears;

And every little corner, nook, and hole
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror; if there be a sun in heaven
She shall not dare to look upon its beams;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me; I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter* CAMILLO *and* GIACOMO, *in conversation.*

Camillo. There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing—
Giacomo. Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and agèd, sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?—
Camillo. Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.
Giacomo. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear; but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father,
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,

Do you not think the Pope would interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law?
Camillo. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality."

Enter ORSINO

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.
Orsino. What words?
Giacomo. Alas, repeat them not again!
There is no redress for me; at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on the meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?
Camillo. Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it—yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay. [*Exit* CAMILLO.
Giacomo. But you, Orsino,
Have the petition; wherefore not present it?
Orsino. I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle

Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.
Giacomo. My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,
Has whispered silence to his Holiness;
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would— [*Stops abruptly.*
Orsino. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover;
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems,—
Were the profaner for his sacred name.
Giacomo. Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such phantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words,—
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye.—My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.
Orsino. But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—
Giacomo. Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.
Orsino. Farewell!—Be your thoughts better or more bold.
[*Exit* GIACOMO.

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement:
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets; for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.
(*After a pause.*) Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered?—Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives,
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or, loving thee,
Could but despise danger and gold and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape . . .
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
My hot palm scorches it; her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:

Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
And she!—Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success:
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts
Till it become his slave—as I will do. [*Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.* LUCRETIA; *to her enter* BEATRICE.

Beatrice. (*She enters staggering and speaks wildly.*) Reach
me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me
I see but indistinctly . . .
Lucretia. My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow . . . Alas! Alas!
What has befallen?
Beatrice. How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels. . . . My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me . . . 'tis substantial, heavy, thick,

I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt!
(*More wildly.*) No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! (*A pause.*)
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here
O'er these dull eyes . . . upon this weary heart!
O world! O life! O day! O misery!
Lucretia. What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not.
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung . . .
Beatrice (*franticly*). Like Parricide . . .
Misery has killed its father: yet its father
Never like mine . . . O, God! What thing am I?
Lucretia. My dearest child, what has your father done?
Beatrice (*doubtfully*). Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.
(*Aside.*) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office. [*To* LUCRETIA, *in a slow, subdued voice.*
Do you know
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined . . . no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wide world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As . . . [*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*
Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed

Thou art not what thou seemest . . . Mother!
Lucretia. Oh!
My sweet child, know you . . .
Beatrice. Yet—speak it not;
For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice,
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me: from this point of time,
I am . . . [*Her voice dies away faintly.*
Lucretia. Alas! What has befalled thee, child?
What has thy father done?
Beatrice. What have I done?
Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
That one with white hair, and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years,
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be!—Oh, what am I?
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?
Lucretia. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child;
We know that death alone can make us free;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?
Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock these pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.
Beatrice. 'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak,
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not . . . something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done;
When I know what, I shall be still and calm.
And never anything will move me more.
But now!—O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,

If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above
Who sees and permits evil, and so die;
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.
Lucretia. It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.
Beatrice. I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me; I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror: of all words
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? For there is none to tell
My misery; if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward . . . Oh, which
Have I deserved?
Lucretia. The peace of innocence,
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.
Beatrice. Ay, death . . .
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of Thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what Thou abhorrest
May mock Thee, unavenged . . . it shall not be!
Self-murder . . . no, that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it.—O! In this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO

(*She approaches him solemnly.*) Welcome, Friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.
Orsino. And what is he who has thus injured you?
Beatrice. The man they call my father; a dread name.
Orsino. It cannot be . . .
Beatrice. What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!
Orsino. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.
Beatrice. Oh, ice-hearted counsellor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare,
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
A mock, a byword, an astonishment:—
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
In hideous hints . . . Oh, most assured redress!
Orsino. You will endure it then?
Beatrice. Endure?—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.
[*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.*
Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?
Orsino. Should the offender live?

Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayst become
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

Beatrice (*to herself*). Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter! [*She retires absorbed in thought.*

Lucretia. If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge . . .

Orsino. Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime . . .

Lucretia. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If, because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? O God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

Orsino. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

Lucretia. How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not . . . but I think it might be good
To . . .

Orsino. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice—
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge;
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel . . .

Lucretia. For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need. [BEATRICE *advances.*

Orsino. Then . . .

Beatrice. Peace, Orsino!
And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,

That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

Orsino. I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

Lucretia. You think we should devise
His death?

Beatrice. And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

Orsino. And yet most cautious.

Lucretia. For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.

Beatrice. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?

Orsino. I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

Lucretia. To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there . . .

Beatrice. He must not arrive.

Orsino. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

Lucretia. The sun will scarce be set.

Beatrice. But I remember

Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life; yet, clinging, leans;
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall; beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns; below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

Orsino. Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until . . .

Beatrice. What sound is that?

Lucretia. Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned . . . Make some excuse for being here.

Beatrice. (*To* Orsino, *as she goes out.*) That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt* Lucretia *and* Beatrice.

Orsino. What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither; let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter Giacomo, *in a hurried manner.*

How! Have you ventured hither? Know you then
That Cenci is from home?

Giacomo. I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.

Orsino. Great God!
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?
Giacomo. Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slanderer; foe to foe.
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate
Under the penury heaped on me by thee,
Or I will . . . God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?
Orsino. Be calm, dear friend.
Giacomo. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my raggèd babes,
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.

And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too; but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
"Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!" I looked, and saw that home was hell
And to that hell will I return no more
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
I will, reversing Nature's law . . .
Orsino. Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.
Giacomo. Then . . . Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide,
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.
Orsino. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.
Giacomo. Is he dead?
Orsino. His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.
Giacomo. What outrage?
Orsino. That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow, bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints, both self-misunderstood
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told, before she spoke it, he must die . . .

Giacomo. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! Is there made
Ravage of thee? O, heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

Orsino. Not so; some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
All is contrived; success is so assured
That . . .

Enter BEATRICE

Beatrice. 'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not?

Giacomo. My sister, my lost sister!

Beatrice. Lost indeed!
I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
He might return; yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency.
And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not—farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*A mean Apartment in* GIACOMO'S *House.*
GIACOMO *alone.*

Giacomo. 'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

[*Thunder and the sound of a storm.*

What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:

They are now living in unmeaning dreams;
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which is most necessary. Oh,
Thou unreplenished lamp! whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hast never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine;
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold;
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death;
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgment seat! [*A bell strikes.*
One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and, when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet . . . 'tis Orsino's step.

Enter ORSINO

Speak!

Orsino. I am come
To say he has escaped.

Giacomo. Escaped!

Orsino. And safe
Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

Giacomo. Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder
Which seemed to howl his knell, in the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done,
But my repentance.

Orsino. See, the lamp is out.

Giacomo. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that life by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?
No, I am hardened.

Orsino. Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

Giacomo (*lighting the lamp*). And yet once quenched I cannot thus relume
My father's life; do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

Orsino. Once gone
You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor . . .

Giacomo. O, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.

Orsino. There is no need of that. Listen; you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

Giacomo. I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

Orsino. Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

Giacomo. Only to talk?

Orsino. The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death; ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end . . .

Giacomo. Listen! What sound is that?

Orsino. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack; nought else.
Giacomo. It is my wife complaining in her sleep:
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.
Orsino. Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.
Giacomo. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands . . .
Orsino. Why, that were well. I must be gone; good-night!
When next we meet—may all be done!
Giacomo. And all
Forgotten! Oh, that I had never been! [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella.*
Enter CENCI.

Cenci. She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay; yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will
Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA

Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence: fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia. Oh,
Husband! I pray, for thine own wretched sake
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage; so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.
Cenci. What! like her sister, who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee,
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.
Lucretia. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
"Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!"
Cenci. Why—such things are . . .
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For when I cursed my sons they died.—Ay . . . so . . .
As to the right or wrong, that's talk . . . repentance?
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well . . . well . . .
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.
[*A pause;* LUCRETIA *approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.*
One, two;
Ay . . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming; to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts

Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
My parchments, and all records of my wealth;
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure . . . [*Going.*

Lucretia. (*Stops him.*) Oh, stay! It was a feint;
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

Cenci. That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

Lucretia. Oh! to what will?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict?

Cenci. Andrea! Go call my daughter,
And if she comes not tell her that I come. (*To* LUCRETIA.)
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men;
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be . . . What? Canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God

Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter ANDREA

Andrea. The Lady Beatrice . . .
Cenci. Speak, pale slave! What
Said she?
Andrea. My Lord, 'twas what she looked; she said:
"Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of Hell between us two, which he may pass;
I will not." [*Exit* ANDREA.
Cenci. Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent; and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
Ha!
With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? For I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter LUCRETIA

Well; what? Speak, wretch!
Lucretia. She said, "I cannot come;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us."
Cenci (*kneeling*). God!
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which Thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If nursed by Thy selectest dew of love
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray Thee for my sake,
As Thou the common God and Father art

Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

Lucretia. Peace! Peacc!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants, He punishes such prayers.

Cenci (*leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven*). He does His will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child . . .

Lucretia. Horrible thought!

Cenci. That if she ever have a child—and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation!—may it be
A hideous likeness of herself; that as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast!
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery!
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural;
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave!
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in Heaven.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle;
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;

My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

Enter LUCRETIA

What? Speak!

Lucretia. She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul . . .

Cenci. She would not come. 'Tis well,
I can do both; first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee; and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! Oh, thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of Heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel; and then . . .
O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
Stir and be quickened . . . even as I am now. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Before the Castle of Petrella. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *above on the Ramparts.*

Beatrice. They come not yet.

Lucretia. 'Tis scarce midnight.

Beatrice. How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed time!

Lucretia. The minutes pass . . .
If he should wake before the deed is done?

Beatrice. O, mother! He must never wake again.
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.

Lucretia. 'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgement with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good nor ill,
And yet to die without confession! . . .
Beatrice. Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO, *below*

Lucretia. See,
They come.
Beatrice. All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE *from above.*
Olimpio. How feel you to this work?
Marzio. As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.
Olimpio. It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.
Marzio. Is that their natural hue?
Olimpio. Or 'tis my hate, and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.
Marzio. You are inclined then to this business?
Olimpio. Ay.
If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *below*

Noble ladies!
Beatrice. Are ye resolved?
Olimpio. Is he asleep?
Marzio. Is all
Quiet?
Lucretia. I mixed an opiate with his drink;
He sleeps so soundly . . .
Beatrice. That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?

Olimpio. We are resolved.
Marzio. As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.
Beatrice. Well, follow!
Olimpio. Hush! Hark! What noise is that?
Marzio. Ha! some one comes!
Beatrice. Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Castle.* *Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA.

Lucretia. They are about it now.
Beatrice. Nay, it is done.
Lucretia. I have not heard him groan.
Beatrice. He will not groan.
Lucretia. What sound is that?
Beatrice. List! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.
Lucretia. My God!
If he be now a cold stiff corpse . . .
Beatrice. O, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone;
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO

Is it accomplished?
Marzio. What?
Olimpio. Did you not call?
Beatrice. When?
Olimpio. Now.
Beatrice. I ask if all is over?
Olimpio. We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin grey hair, his stern and reverend brow,
His veinèd hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.
Marzio. But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,

And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, O, hear
A father's curse! What, art Thou not our Father?"
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

Beatrice. Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation; it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed where mercy insults Heaven . . .
Why do I talk?

[*Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it.*

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
"She murdered her own father!"—I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

Olimpio. Stop, for God's sake!

Marzio. I will go back and kill him.

Olimpio. Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

Beatrice. Take it! Depart! Return!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *aud* MARZIO.

How pale thou art!
We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

Lucretia. Would it were done!

Beatrice. Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and Hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

He is . . .

Olimpio. Dead!

Marzio We strangled him that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

Beatrice (*giving them a bag of coin*). Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this!
[*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*
It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state; so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent; this deed is none.
[*A horn is sounded.*

Lucretia. Hark, 'tis the castle horn; my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

Beatrice. Some tedious guest is coming.

Lucretia. The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves!
[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

Beatrice. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now;
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm; all ill is surely past. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the* LEGATE SAVELLA, *introduced by a Servant, and on the other* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

Savella. Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

Lucretia (*in a hurried and confused manner*). I think he sleeps;
Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,
He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed if were not well.
Wait till day break . . . (*aside*) O, I am deadly sick!

Savella. I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

Lucretia (*with increased agitation*). I dare not rouse him: I know none who dare . . .
'Twere perilous; . . . you might as safely waken
A serpent; or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

Savella. Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

Lucretia (*aside*). O, terror! O, despair!
(*To* BERNARDO.) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber. [*Exeunt* SAVELLA *and* BERNARDO.

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

Lucretia. Oh, agony of fear!
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact;
Oh, horrible, 'tis all discovered!

Beatrice. Mother,
What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child,
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm

As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock,
But shakes it not. [*A cry within and tumult.*
Voices. Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter Bernardo *and* Savella

Savella (*to his followers*). Go search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates, that none escape!
Beatrice. What now?
Bernardo. I know not what to say . . . my father's dead.
Beatrice. How; dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not dead?
Bernardo. Dead; murdered!
Lucretia (*with extreme agitation*). Oh, no, no!
He is not murdered, though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.
Savella. Ha! Is it so?
Beatrice. My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well;
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.
[*Exeunt* Lucretia *and* Beatrice.
Savella. Can you suspect who may have murdered him?
Bernardo. I know not what to think.
Savella. Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?
Bernardo. Alas!
I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.
Savella. 'Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man's body in the moonlight
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,
Among the branches of a pine; he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
And effortless; 'tis true there was no blood . . .
Favour me, Sir; it much imports your house
That all should be made clear; to tell the ladies
That I request their presence. [*Exit* Bernardo

Enter Guards, *bringing in* Marzio

Guard. We have one.
Officer. My Lord, we found this ruffian and another

Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci;
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice; the other fell
Desperately fighting.

Savella. What does he confess?

Officer. He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

Savella. Their language is at least sincere. [*Reads.*

"*To the Lady Beatrice.*

"*That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write. . . .*

"*Thy devoted servant, Orsino.*"

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* BERNARDO

Knowest thou this writing, Lady?

Beatrice No.

Savella. Nor thou?

Lucretia. (*Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.*) Where was it found? What is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

Savella. Is it so?
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

Beatrice. Not hate, 'twas more than hate;
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

Savella. There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

Beatrice. What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

Savella. I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

Lucretia. O, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

Beatrice. Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless . . . Dear mother,

Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? Unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

Savella. You own
That you desired his death?

Beatrice. It would have been
A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew—for God is wise and just—
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven . . . now what of this?

Savella. Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both:
I judge thee not.

Beatrice. And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life; the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free; stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum; let them have been enough;

Leave us the wreck we have.
Savella. I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome:
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.
Lucretia. O, not to Rome! O, take us not to Rome!
Beatrice. Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there
As here, and with His shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured, and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot, as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother; will you come?
Lucretia. Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart! O, misery!
[*She faints, and is borne out.*
Savella. She faints; an ill appearance this.
Beatrice. My Lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not; a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness;
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgement-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord;
Our suite will join yours in the court below. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V

Scene I.—*An Apartment in* Orsino's *Palace. Enter* Orsino *and* Giacomo.

Giacomo. Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
O, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
O, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas! Alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.
Orsino. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.
Giacomo. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind Nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul,
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes . . .
Orsino. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.
Giacomo. O, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire . . .
Orsino. 'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve;
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess 'tis fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?
Giacomo. How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

Orsino. I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

Giacomo. Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She, who alone in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,
Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But, no, defend thyself; [*Drawing.*
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

Orsino. Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think,
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak,
The ministers of justice wait below;
They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

Giacomo. O generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

Orsino. That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor? [*Exit* GIACOMO.
I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy

Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device,
And turned it to a net of ruin . . . Ha! [*A shout is heard.*
Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise,
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life fashioned on old desires,
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered . . . Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of . . . what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves,
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye? [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall of Justice.* CAMILLO, JUDGES, *&c.*, *are discovered seated;* MARZIO *is led in.*

First Judge. Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?
I demand who were the participators
In your offence? Speak truth, and the whole truth.
Marzio. My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.
Second Judge. Away with him!
First Judge. Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss.
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,
That you would bandy lover's talk with it,
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

Marzio. Spare me! O spare! I will confess.
First Judge. Then speak.
Marzio. I strangled him in his sleep.
First Judge. Who urged you to it?
Marzio. His own son Giacomo and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.
First Judge. This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there,
Lead forth the prisoner!

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

Look upon this man;
When did you see him last?
Beatrice We never saw him.
Marzio. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.
Beatrice. I know thee! How? where? when?
Marzio. You know 'twas I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
And bade me thrive; how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.
[BEATRICE *advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.*
Oh, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound; 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.
Beatrice. Poor wretch, I pity thee; yet stay awhile.
Camillo. Guards, lead him not away.
Beatrice. Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom; can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply;

And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is, that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told: "Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life";—and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, "I confess anything":
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonourable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

Camillo (*much moved*). What shall we think, my Lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

Judge. Yet she must be tortured.

Camillo. I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived he would be just her age;
His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy!

Judge. Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay, even
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

Beatrice. What evidence? This man's?

Judge. Even so.

Beatrice (*to* Marzio). Come near. And who art thou, thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men,
To kill the innocent?

Marzio. I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

Beatrice. Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask. [*Turning to the* JUDGES.
I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold calumny,
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.
(*To* MARZIO.) What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?
Marzio. Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round . . . I cannot speak . . .
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch;
I have said all I know; now, let me die!
Beatrice. My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? That with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and, see, he lives
(*Turning to* MARZIO.) And thou . . .
Marzio. O, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.
(*To the* JUDGES.) I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.
Camillo. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice;
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.
Beatrice. O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me,
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay.
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,

And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul,
And my untainted fame; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart;
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation;
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth;
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: "My maker,
I have done this and more; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And because she endured what never any
Guilty or innocent endured before;
Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is—
Hear me, great God!—I swear, most innocent;
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?
  Marzio. Thou art not!
  Judge. What is this?
  Marzio. I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.
  Judge. Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds

Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

Marzio. Torture me as ye will:
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me!
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin.

[*Exit* MARZIO, *guarded.*

Camillo. What say ye now, my Lords?

Judge. Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

Camillo. Yet stained with blood.

Judge (*to* BEATRICE). Know you this paper, Lady?

Beatrice. Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what,
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer

Officer. Marzio's dead.

Judge. What did he say?

Officer. Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
As one who baffles a deep adversary;
And holding his breath, died.

Judge. There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners,
Who yet remain stubborn.

Camillo. I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

Judge. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready: for this night
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch.* *Enter* BERNARDO.

Bernardo. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent,
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus . . . wake! awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?
Beatrice (*awaking*). I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.
Bernardo. Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! O God!
How shall I tell?
Beatrice. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?
Bernardo. Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say,
My heart will break.
Beatrice. See now, thou mak'st me weep;
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.
Bernardo. They have confessed; they could endure no more
The tortures . . .
Beatrice. Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE *with* LUCRETIA *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust?
And that eternal honour, which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,

Changed to a mockery and a byword? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave . . . what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou,
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

Giacomo. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

Lucretia. Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;
And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

Bernardo. If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

Judge. Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures . . .

Beatrice. Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed . . . not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth

To me or mine ; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these ; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and oppressed . . . such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me ?
Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death ?
Beatrice. Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That He permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which He beheld ;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death ?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done ;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will ;
No other pains shall force another word.
Judge. She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here !
Beatrice. Oh, tear him not away !
Judge. Guards, do your duty.
Bernardo (*embracing* BEATRICE). Oh ! would ye divide
Body from soul ?
Officer. That is the headsman's business.
[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO.
Giacomo. Have I confessed ? Is it all over now ?
No hope ! No refuge ! O weak, wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first ? To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister—
Ay, thee ! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world—to that which I
So well deserve ! My wife ! my little ones !
Destitute, helpless ; and I . . . Father ! God !
Canst Thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus ? . . .
[*Covers his face and weeps.*
Lucretia. O my child !
To what a dreadful end are we all come !
Why did I yield ? Why did I not sustain
Those torments ? Oh, that I were all dissolved

Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!

Beatrice. What 'twas weak to do,
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of His wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! Bear up!
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile;
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live: lie down!
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! They are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain!
When to wake? Never again.
O World! Farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart. [*The scene closes.*

Scene IV.—*A Hall of the Prison.* *Enter* Camillo *and* Bernardo.

Camillo. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom; not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice:
"Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words coldly: "they must die."
Bernardo. And yet you left him not?
Camillo. I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."
Bernardo. O God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,

And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return! [*Rushes out.*
Camillo. Alas! poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

Beatrice. I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.
Camillo. May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.
Beatrice (*wildly*). Oh,
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;—
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come,
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? Even though dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of Death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?
Lucretia. Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ; ere night,
Think, we shall be in Paradise.

Beatrice. 'Tis past!
Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill;
How tedious, false, and cold seem all things. I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God,
I hope I do trust in Him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.
[*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out;* GIACOMO *advances.*
Giacomo. Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.
Lucretia. Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.
Beatrice. Yet both will soon be cold
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring;
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep; 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all embracing arms!

Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now . . .

BERNARDO *rushes in*

Bernardo. Oh, horrible!
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one . . What if 'twere fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, Mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
Dead! The sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO *and Guards*

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted . . . white . . . cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!
Beatrice. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now;
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child;
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind

Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do: fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!
Bernardo. I cannot say, farewell!
Camillo. Oh, Lady Beatrice!
Beatrice. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

THE END.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

OR

SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT

A TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DORIC

"Choose Reform or Civil War,
When through thy streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A CONSORT QUEEN shall hunt a KING with hogs,
Riding on the IONIAN MINOTAUR."

[Comp. autumn 1819. Publ. anonymously 1820.]

ADVERTISEMENT

THIS tragedy is one of a triad, or system of three Plays (an arrangement according to which the Greeks were accustomed to connect their dramatic representations) elucidating the wonderful and appalling fortunes of the SWELLFOOT dynasty. It was evidently written by some *learned Theban*; and, from its characteristic dulness, apparently before the duties on the importation of *Attic salt* had been repealed by the Boeotarchs. The tenderness with which he treats the PIGS proves him to have been a *sus Boeotiae*; possibly *Epicuri de grege porcus*; for, as the poet observes,

"A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind."

No liberty has been taken with the translation of this

remarkable piece of antiquity, except the suppressing a seditious and blasphemous Chorus of the Pigs and Bulls at the last Act. The word Hoydipouse (or more properly Oedipus) has been rendered literally SWELLFOOT, without its having been conceived necessary to determine whether a swelling of the hind or the fore feet of the Swinish Monarch is particularly indicated.

Should the remaining portions of this Tragedy be found, entitled, *Swellfoot in Angaria*, and *Charité*, the Translator might be tempted to give them to the reading Public.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

TYRANT SWELLFOOT, *King of Thebes.*
IONA TAURINA, *his Queen.*
MAMMON, *Arch-Priest of Famine.*
PURGANAX, DARKY, LAOCTONOS, } *Wizards, Ministers of* SWELLFOOT.
The GADFLY.
The LEECH.
The RAT.
MOSES, *the Sow-gelder.*
SOLOMON, *the Porkman.*
ZEPHANIAH, *Pig-butcher.*

[*The* MINOTAUR.]

CHORUS *of the Swinish Multitude.*

GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, PRIESTS, *etc., etc.*

SCENE.—THEBES

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A magnificent Temple, built of thigh-bones and death's-heads, and tiled with scalps. Over the Altar the statue of Famine, veiled; a number of Boars, Sows, and Sucking-Pigs, crowned with thistle, shamrock, and oak, sitting on the steps, and clinging round the Altar of the Temple.*

Enter SWELLFOOT, *in his Royal robes, without perceiving the* PIGS

Swellfoot. Thou supreme Goddess! by whose power divine
These graceful limbs are clothed in proud array
[*He contemplates himself with satisfaction.*
Of gold and purple, and this kingly paunch
Swells like a sail before a favouring breeze,
And these most sacred nether promontories
Lie satisfied with layers of fat; and these
Boeotian cheeks, like Egypt's pyramid,

(Nor with less toil were their foundations laid),*
Sustain the cone of my untroubled brain,
That point, the emblem of a pointless nothing!
Thou to whom Kings and laurelled Emperors,
Radical-butchers, Paper-money-millers,
Bishops and Deacons, and the entire army
Of those fat martyrs to the persecution
Of stifling turtle-soup, and brandy-devils,
Offer their secret-vows! Thou plenteous Ceres
Of their Eleusis, hail!

The Swine. Eigh! eigh! eigh! eigh!

Swellfoot. Ha! what are ye,
Who, crowned with leaves devoted to the Furies,
Cling round this sacred shrine?

Swine. Aigh! aigh! aigh!

Swellfoot. What! ye that are
The very beasts that, offered at her altar
With blood and groans, salt-cake, and fat, and inwards,
Ever propitiate her reluctant will
When taxes are withheld?

Swine. Ugh! ugh! ugh!

Swellfoot. What! ye who grub
With filthy snouts my red potatoes up
In Allan's rushy bog? who eat the oats
Up, from my cavalry in the Hebrides?
Who swill the hog-wash soup my cooks digest
From bones, and rags, and scraps of shoe-leather,
Which should be given to cleaner Pigs than you?

The Swine.—Semichorus I

The same, alas! the same;
Though only now the name
Of Pig remains to me.

Semichorus II

If 'twere your kingly will
Us wretched Swine to kill,
What should we yield to thee?

Swellfoot. Why, skin and bones, and some few hairs for mortar.

* See Universal History for an account of the number of people who died, and the immense consumption of garlic by the wretched Egyptians, who made a sepulchre for the name as well as the bodies of their tyrants.

Chorus of Swine

I have heard your Laureate sing,
That pity was a royal thing;
Under your mighty ancestors, we Pigs
Were bless'd as nightingales on myrtle sprigs,
Or grasshoppers that live on noonday dew,
And sung, old annals tell, as sweetly too;
But now our sties are fallen in, we catch
The murrain and the mange, the scab and itch;
Sometimes your royal dogs tear down our thatch,
And then we seek the shelter of a ditch;
Hog-wash or grains, or ruta-baga, none
Has yet been ours since your reign begun.

First Sow

My Pigs, 'tis in vain to tug.

Second Sow

I could almost eat my litter.

First Pig

I suck, but no milk will come from the dug.

Second Pig

Our skin and our bones would be bitter.

The Boars

We fight for this rag of greasy rug,
Though a trough of wash would be fitter.

Semichorus

Happier Swine were they than we,
Drowned in the Gadarean sea—
I wish that pity would drive out the devils,
Which in your royal bosom hold their revels,
And sink us in the waves of thy compassion!
Alas! the Pigs are an unhappy nation!
Now if your Majesty would have our bristles
To bind your mortar with, or fill our colons
With rich blood, or make brawn out of our gristles,
In policy—ask else your royal Solons—
You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw,
And sties well thatched; besides it is the law!

Swellfoot. This is sedition, and rank blasphemy!
Ho! there, my guards!

Enter a GUARD

Guard. Your sacred Majesty.
Swellfoot. Call in the Jews, Solomon the court porkman,
Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah
The hog-butcher.
Guard. They are in waiting, Sire.

Enter SOLOMON, MOSES, *and* ZEPHANIAH

Swellfoot. Out with your knife, old Moses, and spay those Sows
[*The* PIGS *run about in consternation.*
That load the earth with Pigs; cut close and deep.
Moral restraint I see has no effect,
Nor prostitution, nor our own example,
Starvation, typhus-fever, war, nor prison—
This was the art which the arch-priest of Famine
Hinted at in his charge to the Theban clergy—
Cut close and deep, good Moses.
Moses. Let your Majesty
Keep the Boars quiet, else——
Swellfoot. Zephaniah, cut
That fat Hog's throat, the brute seems overfed;
Seditious hunks! to whine for want of grains!
Zephaniah. Your sacred Majesty, he has the dropsy;—
We shall find pints of hydatids in's liver,
He has not half an inch of wholesome fat
Upon his carious ribs——
Swellfoot. 'Tis all the same,
He'll serve instead of riot money, when
Our murmuring troops bivouac in Thebes' streets;
And January winds, after a day
Of butchering, will make them relish carrion.
Now, Solomon, I'll sell you in a lump
The whole kit of them.
Solomon. Why, your Majesty,
I could not give——
Swellfoot. Kill them out of the way,
That shall be price enough; and let me hear
Their everlasting grunts and whines no more!
[*Exeunt, driving in the* SWINE.

Enter MAMMON, *the Arch-Priest; and* PURGANAX, *Chief of the Council of Wizards*

Purganax. The future looks as black as death, a cloud,
Dark as the frown of Hell, hangs over it—
The troops grow mutinous—the revenue fails—
There's something rotten in us—for the level
Of the State slopes, its very bases topple;
The boldest turn their backs upon themselves!

Mammon. Why what's the matter, my dear fellow, now?
Do the troops mutiny?—decimate some regiments;
Does money fail?—come to my mint—coin paper,
Till gold be at a discount, and ashamed
To show his bilious face, go purge himself,
In emulation of her vestal whiteness.

Purganax. Oh, would that this were all! The oracle!!

Mammon. Why it was I who spoke that oracle,
And whether I was dead drunk or inspired,
I cannot well remember; nor, in truth,
The oracle itself!

Purganax. The words went thus:—
"Boeotia, choose reform or civil war!
When through the streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur."

Mammon. Now if the oracle had ne'er foretold
This sad alternative, it must arrive,
Or not, and so it must now that it has;
And whether I was urged by grace divine
Or Lesbian liquor to declare these words,
Which must, as all words must, be false or true,
It matters not; for the same Power made all,
Oracle, wine, and me and you—or none—
'Tis the same thing. If you knew as much
Of oracles as I do——

Purganax. You arch-priests
Believe in nothing; if you were to dream
Of a particular number in the Lottery,
You would not buy the ticket?

Mammon. Yet our tickets
Are seldom blanks. But what steps have you taken?
For prophecies, when once they get abroad,
Like liars who tell the truth to serve their ends,
Or hypocrites who, from assuming virtue,
Do the same actions that the virtuous do,

Contrive their own fulfilment. This Iona——
Well—you know what the chaste Pasiphae did,
Wife to that most religious King of Crete,
And still how popular the tale is here;
And these dull Swine of Thebes boast their descent
From the free Minotaur. You know they still
Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate,
And everything relating to a Bull
Is popular and respectable in Thebes;
Their arms are seven Bulls in a field gules;
They think their strength consists in eating beef;—
Now there were danger in the precedent
If Queen Iona——

Purganax. I have taken good care
That shall not be. I struck the crust o' the earth
With this enchanted rod, and Hell lay bare!
And from a cavern full of ugly shapes
I chose a LEECH, a GADFLY, and a RAT.
The Gadfly was the same which Juno sent
To agitate Io,* and which Ezekiel † mentions
That the Lord whistled for out of the mountains
Of utmost Aethiopia, to torment
Mesopotamian Babylon. The beast
Has a loud trumpet like the scarabee;
His crookèd tail is barbed with many stings,
Each able to make a thousand wounds, and each
Immedicable; from his convex eyes
He sees fair things in many hideous shapes,
And trumpets all his falsehood to the world.
Like other beetles he is fed on dung—
He has eleven feet with which he crawls,
Trailing a blistering slime; and this foul beast
Has tracked Iona from the Theban limits,
From isle to isle, from city unto city,
Urging her flight from the far Chersonese
To fabulous Solyma, and the Aetnean Isle,
Ortygia, Melite, and Calypso's Rock,
And the swart tribes of Garamant and Fez,
Aeolia and Elysium, and thy shores,
Parthenope, which now, alas! are free!
And through the fortunate Saturnian land,

* The *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus.

† And the Lord whistled for the gadfly out of Aethiopia, and for the bee of Egypt, etc.—EZEKIEL.

Into the darkness of the West.
Mammon. But if
This Gadfly should drive Iona hither?
Purganax. Gods! what an *if!* but there is my grey RAT:
So thin with want, he can crawl in and out
Of any narrow chink and filthy hole,
And he shall creep into her dressing-room,
And——
Mammon. My dear friend, where are your wits? as if
She does not always toast a piece of cheese
And bait the trap? and rats, when lean enough
To crawl through *such* chinks——
Purganax. But my LEECH—a leech
Fit to suck blood, with lubricous round rings,
Capaciously expatiative, which make
His little body like a red balloon,
As full of blood as that of hydrogen,
Sucked from men's hearts; insatiably he sucks
And clings and pulls—a horse-leech, whose deep maw
The plethoric King Swellfoot could not fill,
And who, till full, will cling for might ever.
Mammon. This
For Queen Iona would suffice, and less;
But 'tis the Swinish multitude I fear,
And in that fear I have——
Purganax. Done what?
Mammon. Disinherited
My eldest son Chrysaor, because he
Attended public meetings, and would always
Stand prating there of commerce, public faith,
Economy, and unadulterate coin,
And other topics, ultra-radical;
And have entailed my estate, called the Fool's Paradise,
And funds in fairy-money, bonds, and bills,
Upon my accomplished daughter Banknotina,
And married her to the gallows.*
Purganax. A good match!
Mammon. A high connexion, Purganax. The bridegroom
Is of a very ancient family,
Of Hounslow Heath, Tyburn, and the New Drop,
And has great influence in both Houses;—oh!
He makes the fondest husband; nay, *too* fond,—

* "If one should marry a gallows, and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone."—CYMBELINE.

New-married people should not kiss in public;
But the poor souls love one another so!
And then my little grandchildren, the gibbets,
Promising children as you ever saw,—
The young playing at hanging, the elder learning
How to hold radicals. They are well taught too,
For every gibbet says its catechism
And reads a select chapter in the Bible
Before it goes to play.

[*A most tremendous humming is heard.*

Purganax. Ha! what do I hear?

Enter the GADFLY

Mammon. Your Gadfly, as it seems, is tired of gadding.

Gadfly

Hum! hum! hum!
From the lakes of the Alps, and the cold grey scalps
Of the mountains, I come!
Hum! hum! hum!
From Morocco and Fez, and the high palaces
Of golden Byzantium;
From the temples divine of old Palestine,
From Athens and Rome,
With a ha! and a hum!
I come! I come!

All inn-doors and windows
Were open to me:
I saw all that sin does,
Which lamps hardly see
That burn in the night by the curtained bed,—
The impudent lamps! for they blushed not red.
Dinging and singing,
From slumber I rung her,
Loud as the clank of an ironmonger;
Hum! hum! hum!

Far, far, far!
With the trump of my lips and the sting at my hips,
I drove her—afar!
Far, far, far!
From city to city, abandoned of pity,
A ship without needle or star;—
Homeless she passed, like a cloud on the blast,

Seeking peace, finding war ;—
She is here in her car,
From afar, and afar ;—
Hum ! hum !

I have stung her and wrung her,
The venom is working ;—
And if you had hung her
With canting and quirking,
She could not be deader than she will be soon ;
I have driven her close to you, under the moon,
Night and day, hum ! hum ! ha !
I have hummed her and drummed her
From place to place, till at last I have dumbed her,
Hum ! hum ! hum !

Enter the LEECH *and the* RAT

Leech

I will suck
Blood or muck !
The disease of the state is a plethory,
Who so fit to reduce it as I ?

Rat

I'll slily seize and
Let blood from her weasand,—
Creeping through crevice, and chink, and cranny.
With my snaky tail, and my sides so scranny.

Purganax

Aroint ye ! thou unprofitable worm ! [*To the* LEECH.
And thou, dull beetle, get thee back to hell ! [*To the* GADFLY.
To sting the ghosts of Babylonian kings,
And the ox-headed Io——

Swine (*within*)

Ugh, ugh, ugh !
Hail ! Iona the divine !
We will be no longer Swine,
But Bulls with horns and dewlaps.

Rat

For,
You know, my lord, the Minotaur——

Purganax (*fiercely*)

Be silent! get to hell! or I will call
The cat out of the kitchen. Well, Lord Mammon
This is a pretty business. [*Exit the* RAT.

Mammon

I will go
And spell some scheme to make it ugly then.— [*Exit.*

Enter SWELLFOOT

Swellfoot. She is returned! Taurina is in Thebes,
When Swellfoot wishes that she were in hell!
Oh, Hymen, clothed in yellow jealousy,
And waving o'er the couch of wedded kings
The torch of Discord with its fiery hair;
This is thy work, thou patron saint of queens!
Swellfoot is wived! though parted by the sea,
The very name of wife had conjugal rights;
Her cursèd image ate, drank, slept with me,
And in the arms of Adiposa oft
Her memory has received a husband's——
[*A loud tumult, and cries of* "Iona for ever!—No Swellfoot!"
Hark!
How the Swine cry Iona Taurina!
I suffer the real presence; Purganax,
Off with her head!
Purganax. But I must first impanel
A jury of the Pigs.
Swellfoot. Pack them then.
Purganax. Or fattening some few in two separate sties,
And giving them clean straw, tying some bits
Of ribbon round their legs—giving their Sows
Some tawdry lace, and bits of lustre glass,
And their young Boars white and red rags, and tails
Of cows, and jay feathers, and sticking cauliflowers
Between the ears of the old ones; and when
They are persuaded, that by the inherent virtue
Of these things, they are all imperial Pigs,
Good Lord! they'd rip each other's bellies up,
Not to say, help us in destroying her.
Swellfoot. This plan might be tried too;—where's General
Laoctonos?

Enter LAOCTONOS *and* DAKRY

It is my royal pleasure
That you, Lord General, bring the head and body,
If separate it would please me better, hither
Of Queen Iona.

Laoctonos. That pleasure I well knew,
And made a charge with those battalions bold,
Called, from their dress and grin, the royal apes,
Upon the Swine, who in a hollow square
Enclosed her, and received the first attack
Like so many rhinoceroses, and then
Retreating in good order, with bare tusks
And wrinkled snouts presented to the foe,
Bore her in triumph to the public sty.
What is still worse, some Sows upon the ground
Have given the ape-guards apples, nuts, and gin,
And they all whisk their tails aloft, and cry,
"Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!"

Purganax. Hark!

The Swine (*without*). Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!

Dakry. I
Went to the garret of the Swineherd's tower,
Which overlooks the sty, and made a long
Harangue (all words) to the assembled Swine,
Of delicacy, mercy, judgement, law,
Morals, and precedents, and purity,
Adultery, destitution, and divorce,
Piety, faith, and state necessity,
And how I loved the Queen!—and then I wept
With the pathos of my own eloquence,
And every tear turned to a mill-stone, which
Brained many a gaping Pig, and there was made
A slough of blood and brains upon the place,
Greased with the pounded bacon; round and round
The mill-stones rolled, ploughing the pavement up,
And hurling Sucking-Pigs into the air,
With dust and stones.——

Enter MAMMON

Mammon. I wonder that grey wizards
Like you should be so beardless in their schemes;
It had been but a point of policy
To keep Iona and the Swine apart.

Divide and rule! but ye have made a junction
Between two parties who will govern you
But for my art.—Behold this BAG! it is
The poison BAG of that Green Spider huge,
On which our spies skulked in ovation through
The streets of Thebes, when they were paved with dead:
A bane so much the deadlier fills it now
As calumny is worse than death,—for here
The Gadfly's venom, fifty times distilled,
Is mingled with the vomit of the Leech,
In due proportion, and black ratsbane, which
That very Rat, who, like the Pontic tyrant,
Nurtures himself on poison, dare not touch;—
All is sealed up with the broad seal of Fraud,
Who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor,
And over it the Primate of all Hell
Murmured this pious baptism:—"Be thou called
The GREEN BAG; and this power and grace be thine:
That thy contents, on whomsoever poured,
Turn innocence to guilt, and gentlest looks
To savage, foul, and fierce deformity;
Let all baptized by thy infernal dew
Be called adulterer, drunkard, liar, wretch!
No name left out which orthodoxy loves,
Court Journal or legitimate Review!—
Be they called tyrant, beast, fool, glutton, lover
Of other wives and husbands than their own—
The heaviest sin on this side of the Alps!
Whither they to a ghastly caricature
Of what was human!—let not man or beast
Behold their face with unaverted eyes!
Or hear their names with ears that tingle not
With blood of indignation, rage, and shame!"—
This is a perilous liquor;—good my Lords.—
[SWELLFOOT *approaches to touch the* GREEN BAG.
Beware! for God's sake, beware!—if you should break
The seal, and touch the fatal liquor——
Purganax. There,
Give it to me. I have been used to handle
All sorts of poisons. His dread Majesty
Only desires to see the colour of it.
Mammon. Now, with a little common sense, my Lords,
Only undoing all that has been done,
(Yet so as it may seem we but confirm it),

Our victory is assured. We must entice
Her Majesty from the sty, and make the Pigs
Believe that the contents of the GREEN BAG
Are the true test of guilt or innocence.
And that, if she be guilty, 'twill transform her
To manifest deformity like guilt;
If innocent, she will become transfigured
Into an angel, such as they say she is;
And they will see her flying through the air,
So bright that she will dim the noonday sun,
Showering down blessings in the shape of comfits.
This, trust a priest, is just the sort of thing
Swine will believe. I'll wager you will see them
Climbing upon the thatch of their low sties,
With pieces of smoked glass, to watch her sail
Among the clouds, and some will hold the flaps
Of one another's ears between their teeth,
To catch the coming hail of comfits in.
You, Purganax, who have the gift o' the gab,
Make them a solemn speech to this effect:
I go to put in readiness the feast
Kept to the honour of our goddess Famine,
Where, for more glory, let the ceremony
Take place of the uglification of the Queen.

Dakry (*to* SWELLFOOT). I, as the keeper of your sacred conscience,
Humbly remind your Majesty that the care
Of your high office, as Man-milliner
To red Bellona, should not be deferred.

Purganax. All part, in happier plight to meet again.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*The Public Sty.* *The* BOARS *in full Assembly*

Enter PURGANAX

Purganax. Grant me your patience, Gentlemen and Boars,
Ye, by whose patience under public burthens
The glorious constitution of these sties
Subsists, and shall subsist. The Lean-Pig rates

Grow with the growing populace of Swine;
The taxes, that true source of Piggishness
(How can I find a more appropriate term
To include religion, morals, peace, and plenty,
And all that fit Boeotia as a nation
To teach the other nations how to live?),
Increase with Piggishness itself; and still
Does the revenue, that great spring of all
The patronage, and pensions, and by-payments,
Which free-born Pigs regard with jealous eyes,
Diminish, till at length, by glorious steps,
All the land's produce will be merged in taxes,
And the revenue will amount to—nothing!
The failure of a foreign market for
Sausages, bristles, and blood-puddings,
And such home manufactures, is but partial;
And, that the population of the Pigs,
Instead of hog-wash, has been fed on straw
And water, is a fact which is—you know—
That is—it is a state-necessity—
Temporary, of course. Those impious Pigs,
Who, by frequent squeaks, have dared impugn
The settled Swellfoot system, or to make
Irreverent mockery of the genuflexions
Inculcated by the arch-priest, have been whipped
Into a loyal and an orthodox whine.
Things being in this happy state, the Queen
Iona——

[*A loud cry from the* PIGS. She is innocent! most innocent!

Purganax. That is the very thing that I was saying,
Gentlemen Swine; the Queen Iona being
Most innocent, no doubt, returns to Thebes,
And the lean Sows and Boars collect about her,
Wishing to make her think that WE believe
(I mean those more substantial Pigs, who swill
Rich hog-wash, while the others mouth damp straw)
That she is guilty; thus, the Lean-Pig faction
Seeks to obtain that hog-wash, which has been
Your immemorial right, and which I will
Maintain you in to the last drop of——

A Boar (*interrupting him*). What
Does any one accuse her of?

Purganax. Why, no one
Makes *any* positive accusation;—but

There were hints dropped, and so the privy wizards
Conceived that it became them to advise
His majesty to investigate their truth ;—
Not for his own sake ; he could be content
To let his wife play any pranks she pleased,
If, by that sufferance, *he* could please the Pigs ;
But then he fears the morals of the Swine,
The Sows especially, and what effect
It might produce upon the purity and
Religion of the rising generation
Of Sucking-Pigs, if it could be suspected
That Queen Iona—— [*A pause.*

First Boar. Well, go on ; we long
To hear what she can possibly have done.

Purganax. Why, it is hinted, that a certain Bull—
Thus much is *known* :—the milk-white Bulls that feed
Beside Clitumnus and the crystal lakes
Of the Cisalpine mountains, in fresh dews
Of lotus-grass and blossoming asphodel
Sleeking their silken hair, and with sweet breath
Loading the morning winds until they faint
With living fragrance, are so beautiful !—
Well, *I* say nothing ;—but Europa rode
On such a one from Asia into Crete,
And the enamoured sea grew calm beneath
His gliding beauty. And Pasiphae,
Iona's grandmother,——but *she* is innocent !
And that both you and I, and all assert.

First Boar. Most innocent !

Purganax. Behold this BAG ; a bag——

Second Boar. Oh ! no GREEN BAGS !! Jealousy's eyes are green,
Scorpions are green, and water-snakes, and efts,
And verdigris, and——

Purganax. Honourable Swine,
In Piggish souls can prepossessions reign ?
Allow me to remind you, grass is green—
All flesh is grass ;—no bacon but is flesh—
Ye are but bacon. This divining BAG
(Which is not green, but only bacon colour)
Is filled with liquor, which if sprinkled o'er
A woman guilty of——we all know what—
Makes her so hideous, till she finds one blind
She never can commit the like again.

If innocent, she will turn into an angel,
And rain down blessings in the shape of comfits
As she flies up to heaven. Now, my proposal
Is to convert her sacred Majesty
Into an angel (as I am sure we shall do),
By pouring on her head this mystic water. [*Showing the Bag.*
I know that she is innocent; I wish
Only to prove her so to all the world.

First Boar. Excellent, just, and noble Purganax!

Second Boar. How glorious it will be to see her Majesty
Flying above our heads, her petticoats
Streaming like—like—like—

Third Boar. Anything.

Purganax. Oh, no!
But like a standard of an admiral's ship,
Or like the banner of a conquering host,
Or like a cloud dyed in the dying day,
Unravelled on the blast from a white mountain;
Or like a meteor, or a war-steed's mane,
Or waterfall from a dizzy precipice
Scattered upon the wind.

First Boar. Or a cow's tail,—

Second Boar. Or *anything*, as the learned Boar observed.

Purganax. Gentlemen Boars, I move a resolution,
That her most sacred Majesty should be
Invited to attend the feast of Famine,
And to receive upon her chaste white body
Dews of Apotheosis from this BAG

[*A great confusion is heard of the* PIGS OUT OF DOORS, *which communicates itself to those within. During the first Strophe, the doors of the Sty are staved in, and a number of exceedingly lean* PIGS *and* SOWS *and* BOARS *rush in.*

Semichorus I

No! Yes!

Semichorus II

Yes! No!

Semichorus I

A law!

Semichorus II

A flaw!

Semichorus I

Porkers, we shall lose our wash,
Or must share it with the Lean-Pigs!

First Boar

Order! order! be not rash!
Was there ever such a scene, Pigs!

An old Sow (*rushing in*)

I never saw so fine a dash
Since I first began to wean Pigs.

Second Boar (*solemnly*)

The Queen will be an angel time enough.
I vote, in form of an amendment, that
Purganax rub a little of that stuff
Upon his face.

Purganax (*his heart is seen to beat through his waistcoat*).
Gods! What would ye be at?

Semichorus I

Purganax has plainly shown a
Cloven foot and jackdaw feather.

Semichorus II

I vote Swellfoot and Iona
Try the magic test together
Whenever royal spouses bicker,
Both should try the magic liquor.

An old Boar (*aside*)

A miserable state is that of Pigs,
For if their drivers would tear caps and wigs,
The Swine must bite each other's ear therefore.

An old Sow (*aside*)

A wretched lot Jove has assigned to Swine,
Squabbling makes Pig-herds hungry, and they dine
On bacon, and whip Sucking-Pigs the more.

Chorus

Hog-wash has been ta'en away:
If the Bull-Queen is divested,
We shall be in every way
Hunted, stripped, exposed, molested;

Let us do whate'er we may,
That she shall not be arrested.
QUEEN, we entrench you with the walls of brawn,
And palisades of tusks, sharp as a bayonet:
Place your most sacred person here. We pawn
Our lives that none a finger dare to lay on it.
Those who wrong you, wrong us;
Those who hate you, hate us;
Those who sting you, sting us;
Those who bait you, bait us;
The *oracle* is now about to be
Fulfilled by circumvolving destiny,
Which says: "Thebes, choose *reform* or *civil war*,
When through your streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A CONSORT QUEEN shall hunt a KING with Hogs,
Riding upon the IONIAN MINOTAUR."

Enter IONA TAURINA

Iona Taurina (*coming forward*). Gentlemen Swine, and gentle Lady-Pigs,
The tender heart of every Boar acquits
Their QUEEN of any act incongruous
With native Piggishness, and she, reposing
With confidence upon the grunting nation,
Has thrown herself, her cause, her life, her all,
Her innocence, into their Hoggish arms;
Nor has the expectation been deceived
Of finding shelter there. Yet know, great Boars,
(For such whoever lives among you finds you,
And so do I), the innocent are proud!
I have accepted your protection only
In compliment of your kind love and care,
Not for necessity. The innocent
Are safest there where trials and dangers wait;
Innocent Queens o'er white-hot ploughshares tread
Unsinged; and ladies, Erin's laureate sings it,*
Decked with rare gems, and beauty rarer still,
Walked from Killarney to the Giant's Causeway,
Through rebels, smugglers, troops of yeomanry,
White boys and Orange-boys, and constables,
Tithe-proctors, and excise people, uninjured!
Thus I!——

* "Rich and rare were the gems she wore." See Moore's *Irish Melodies.*

Lord Purganax, I do commit myself
Into your custody, and am prepared
To stand the test, whatever it may be!

Purganax. This magnanimity in your sacred Majesty
Must please the Pigs. You cannot fail of being
A heavenly angel. Smoke your bits of glass,
Ye loyal Swine, or her transfiguration
Will blind your wondering eyes.

An old Boar (*aside*). Take care, my Lord,
They do not smoke you first.

Purganax. At the approaching feast
Of Famine, let the expiation be.

Swine. Content! content!

Iona Taurina (*aside*). I, most content of all,
Know that my foes even thus prepare their fall!

[*Exeunt omnes.*

Scene II.—*The interior of the Temple of Famine. The statue of the Goddess, a skeleton clothed in parti-coloured rags, seated upon a heap of skulls and loaves intermingled. A number of exceedingly fat Priests in black garments arrayed on each side, with marrow-bones and cleavers in their hands.* [Solomon, *the Court Porkman.*] *A flourish of trumpets.*

Enter Mammon *as arch-priest,* Swellfoot, Dakry, Purganax, Laoctonos, *followed by* Iona Taurina *guarded. On the other side enter the* Swine.

Chorus of Priests *accompanied by the* Court Porkman *on marrow-bones and cleavers*

Goddess bare, and gaunt, and pale,
Empress of the world, all hail!
What though Cretans old called thee
City-crested Cybele?
We call thee Famine!
Goddess of fasts and feasts, starving and cramming!
Through thee, for emperors, kings, and priests and lords,
Who rule by viziers, sceptres, bank-notes, words,
The earth pours forth its plenteous fruits,
Corn, wool, linen, flesh, and roots.
Those who consume these fruits through thee grow fat,
Those who produce these fruits through thee grow lean,
Whatever change takes place, oh, stick to that!
And let things be as they have ever been;

At least while we remain thy priests,
And proclaim thy fasts and feasts.
Through thee the sacred SWELLFOOT dynasty
Is based upon a rock amid that sea
Whose waves are Swine—so let it ever be!

[SWELLFOOT, *etc., seat themselves at a table, magnificently covered, at the upper end of the Temple. Attendants pass over the stage with hog-wash in pails. A number of* PIGS, *exceedingly lean, follow them licking up the wash.*

Mammon. I fear your sacred majesty has lost
The appetite which you were used to have.
Allow me now to recommend this dish—
A simple kickshaw by your Persian cook,
Such as is served at the great King's second table.
The price and pains which its ingredients cost
Might have maintained some dozen families
A winter or two—not more—so plain a dish
Could scarcely disagree.—
Swellfoot. After the trial,
And these fastidious Pigs are gone, perhaps
I may recover my lost appetite,—
I feel the gout flying about my stomach—
Give me a glass of Maraschino punch.
Purganax (*filling his glass, and standing up*). The glorious Constitution of the Pigs?
All. A toast! a toast! stand up, and three times three!
Dakry. No heel-taps—darken day-lights!—
Laoctonos. Claret, somehow,
Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret!
Swellfoot. Laoctonos is fishing for a compliment,
But 'tis his due. Yes, you have drunk more wine,
And shed more blood, than any man in Thebes.
[*To* PURGANAX.
For God's sake stop the grunting of those Pigs!
Purganax. We dare not, Sire, 'tis Famine's privilege.

Chorus of Swine

Hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
Thy throne is on blood, and thy robe is of rags;
Thou devil which livest on damning;
Saint of new churches, and cant, and GREEN BAGS;
Till in pity and terror thou risest,

Confounding the schemes of the wisest,
When thou liftest thy skeleton form,
When the loaves and the skulls roll about,
We will greet thee—the voice of a storm
Would be lost in our terrible shout!

Then hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
Hail to thee, Empress of Earth!
When thou risest, dividing possessions;
When thou risest, uprooting oppressions,
In the pride of thy ghastly mirth;
Over palaces, temples, and graves,
We will rush as thy minister-slaves,
Trampling behind in thy train,
Till all be made level again!

Mammon. I hear a crackling of the giant bones
Of the dread image, and in the black pits
Which once were eyes, I see two livid flames.
These prodigies are oracular, and show
The presence of the unseen Deity.
Mighty events are hastening to their doom!
Swellfoot. I only hear the lean and mutinous Swine
Grunting about the temple.
Dakry. In a crisis
Of such exceeding delicacy, I think
We ought to put her Majesty, the QUEEN,
Upon her trial without delay.
Mammon. THE BAG
Is here.
Purganax. I have rehearsed the entire scene
With an ox-bladder and some ditchwater,
On Lady P——; it cannot fail. (*Taking up the Bag.*) Your Majesty [*To* SWELLFOOT.
In such a filthy business had better
Stand on one side, lest it should sprinkle you.
A spot or two on me would do no harm;
Nay, it might hide the blood, which the sad Genius
Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
Upon my brow—which would stain all its seas,
But which those seas could never wash away!
Iona Taurina. My Lord, I am ready—nay, I am impatient
To undergo the test.

[*A graceful figure in a semi-transparent veil passes unnoticed through the Temple; the word* LIBERTY *is seen through the veil, as if it were written in fire upon its forehead. Its words are almost drowned in the furious grunting of the* PIGS, *and the business of the trial. She kneels on the steps of the altar, and speaks in tones at first faint and low, but which ever become louder and louder.*

Mighty Empress! Death's white wife!
Ghastly mother-in-law of Life!
By the God who made thee such,
By the magic of thy touch,
By the starving and the cramming
Of fasts and feasts! by thy dread self, O Famine!
I charge thee! when thou wake the multitude,
Thou lead them not upon the paths of blood.
The earth did never mean her foison
For those who crown life's cup with poison
Of fanatic rage and meaningless revenge—
But for those radiant spirits, who are still
The standard-bearers in the van of Change.
Be they th' appointed stewards, to fill
The lap of Pain, and Toil, and Age!
Remit, O Queen! thy accustomed rage!
Be what thou art not! In voice faint and low
FREEDOM calls *Famine*, her eternal foe,
To brief alliance, hollow truce.—Rise now!

[*Whilst the Veiled Figure has been chanting this strophe,* MAMMON, DAKRY, LAOCTONOS, *and* SWELLFOOT, *have surrounded* IONA TAURINA, *who, with her hands folded on her breast, and her eyes lifted to Heaven, stands, as with saint-like resignation, to wait the issue of the business, in perfect confidence of her innocence.*

[PURGANAX, *after unsealing the* GREEN BAG, *is gravely about to pour the liquor upon her head, when suddenly the whole expression of her figure and countenance changes; she snatches it from his hand with a loud laugh of triumph, and empties it over* SWELLFOOT *and his whole Court, who are instantly changed into a number of filthy and ugly animals, and rush out of the Temple. The image of* FAMINE *then arises with a tremendous sound, the* PIGS *begin scrambling for the loaves, and are tripped*

up by the skulls; all those who EAT *the loaves are turned into* BULLS, *and arrange themselves quietly behind the altar. The image of* FAMINE *sinks through a chasm in the earth, and a* MINOTAUR *rises.*

Minotaur. I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
Of all Europa's taurine progeny—
I am the old traditional Man-Bull;
And from my ancestors having been Ionian,
I am called Ion, which, by interpretation,
Is JOHN; in plain Theban, that is to say,
My name's JOHN BULL; I am a famous hunter,
And can leap any gate in all Boeotia,
Even the palings of the royal park,
Or double ditch about the new enclosures;
And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
At least till you have hunted down your game,
I will not throw you.

Iona Tourina. (*During this speech she has been putting on boots and spurs, and a hunting-cap, buckishly cocked on one side; and tucking up her hair, she leaps nimbly on his back.*) Hoa! hoa! tallyho! tallyho! ho! ho!
Come, let us hunt these ugly badgers down,
These stinking foxes, these devouring otters,
These hares, these wolves, these anything but men.
Hey, for a whipper-in! my loyal Pigs,
Now let your noses be as keen as beagles',
Your steps as swift as greyhounds', and your cries
More dulcet and symphonious than the bells
Of village-towers, on sunshine holiday;
Wake all the dewy woods with jangling music.
Give them no law (are they not beasts of blood?)
But such as they gave you. Tallyho! ho!
Through forest, furze, and bog, and den, and desert,
Pursue the ugly beasts! tallyho! ho!

Full Chorus of IONA *and the* SWINE

Tallyho! tallyho!
Through rain, hail, and snow,
Through brake, gorse, and briar,
Through fen, flood, and mire,
We go! we go!

Tallyho! tallyho!
Through pond, ditch, and slough,
Wind them, and find them,
Like the Devil behind them,
Tallyho! tallyho!

[*Exeunt, in full cry;* IONA *driving on the* SWINE, *with the empty* GREEN BAG.

THE END.

HELLAS

A LYRICAL DRAMA

ΜΑΝΤΙΣ 'ΕΙΜ' 'ΕΣΘΛΩΝ 'ΑΓΩΝΩΝ.—OEDIP. COLON.

[Comp. at Pisa, Autumn of 1821. Publ. 1822.]

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
PRINCE ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATO
late secretary for foreign affairs to the Hospodar of Wallachia.

The Drama of Hellas is inscribed as an imperfect token of the admiration, sympathy, and friendship of

THE AUTHOR.

PISA, *Nov.* 1, 1821.

PREFACE

THE poem of Hellas, written at the suggestion of the events of the moment, is a mere improvise, and derives its interest (should it be found to possess any) solely from the intense sympathy which the Author feels with the cause he would celebrate.

The subject, in its present state, is insusceptible of being treated otherwise than lyrically, and if I have called this poem a drama from the circumstance of its being composed in dialogue, the licence is not greater than that which has been assumed by other poets who have called their productions epics, only because they have been divided into twelve or twenty-four books.

The *Persae* of Aeschylus afforded me the first model of my conception, although the decision of the glorious contest now waging in Greece being yet suspended forbids a catastrophe parallel to the return of Xerxes and the desolation of the Persians. I have, therefore, contented myself

with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity, which falls upon the unfinished scene, such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilisation and social improvement.

The drama (if drama it must be called) is, however, so inartificial that I doubt whether, if recited on the Thespian waggon to an Athenian village at the Dionysiaca, it would have obtained the prize of the goat. I shall bear with equanimity any punishment, greater than the loss of such a reward, which the Aristarchi of the hour may think fit to inflict.

The only *goat-song* which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite of the unfavourable nature of the subject, received a greater and more valuable portion of applause than I expected or than it deserved.

Common fame is the only authority which I can allege for the details which form the basis of the poem, and I must trespass upon the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced. Undoubtedly, until the conclusion of the war, it will be impossible to obtain an account of it sufficiently authentic for historical materials; but poets have their privilege, and it is unquestionable that actions of the most exalted courage have been performed by the Greeks—that they have gained more than one naval victory, and that their defeat in Wallachia was signalized by circumstances of heroism more glorious even than victory.

The apathy of the rulers of the civilised world to the astonishing circumstance of the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilisation, rising as it were from the ashes of their ruin, is something perfectly inexplicable to a mere spectator of the shows of this mortal scene. We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess.

The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image on those faultless productions, whose very fragments are the despair of modern art, and has propagated impulses which

cannot cease, through a thousand channels of manifest or imperceptible operation, to ennoble and delight mankind until the extinction of the race.

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind, and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders—and that below the level of ordinary degradation—let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease as soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of *Anastasius* could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth, returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The University of Chios contained before the breaking out of the revolution eight hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

The English permit their own oppressors to act according to their natural sympathy with the Turkish tyrant, and to brand upon their name the indelible blot of an alliance with the enemies of domestic happiness, of Christianity and civilisation.

Russia desires to possess, not to liberate Greece; and is contented to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia and the Turk;—but when was the oppressor generous or just?

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has

been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe, and that enemy well knows the power and the cunning of its opponents, and watches the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

PROLOGUE TO HELLAS

[Publ. 1862.]

Herald of Eternity. It is the day when all the sons of God
Wait in the roofless senate-house, whose floor
Is Chaos, and the immovable abyss
Frozen by His steadfast word to hyaline

. . . .

The shadow of God, and delegate
Of that before whose breath the universe
Is as a print of dew.
Hierarchs and kings
Who from your thrones pinnacled on the past
Sway the reluctant present, ye who sit
Pavilioned on the radiance or the gloom
Of mortal thought, which like an exhalation
Steaming from earth, conceals the of heaven
Which gave it birth, assemble here
Before your Father's throne; the swift decree
Yet hovers, and the fiery incarnation
Is yet withheld, clothèd in which it shall
annul
The fairest of those wandering isles that gem
The sapphire space of interstellar air,
That green and azure sphere, that earth enwrapped
Less in the beauty of its tender light
Than in an atmosphere of living spirit
Which interpenetrating all the . . .
it rolls from realm to realm
And age to age, and in its ebb and flow
Impels the generations
To their appointed place,
Whilst the high Arbiter
Beholds the strife, and at the appointed time
Sends His decrees veiled in the eternal . . .

Within the circuit of this pendent orb
There lies an antique region, on which fell
The dews of thought in the world's golden dawn

Earliest and most benign, and from it sprung
Temples and cities and immortal forms
And harmonies of wisdom and of song,
And thoughts, and deeds worthy of thoughts so fair.
And when the sun of its dominion failed,
And when the winter of its glory came,
The winds that stripped it bare blew on and swept
That dew into the utmost wildernesses,
In wandering clouds of sunny rain that thawed
The unmaternal bosom of the North.
Haste, sons of God, for ye beheld,
Reluctant, or consenting, or astonished,
The stern decrees go forth, which heaped on Greece
Ruin and degradation and despair.
A fourth now waits: assemble, sons of God,
To speed or to prevent or to suspend,
If, as ye dream, such power be not withheld,
The unaccomplished destiny.

. . . .

Chorus

The curtain of the Universe
Is rent and shattered,
The splendour-wingèd worlds disperse
Like wild doves scattered.

Space is roofless and bare,
And in the midst a cloudy shrine,
Dark amid thrones of light.
In the blue glow of hyaline
Golden worlds revolve and shine.
In flight
From every point of the Infinite,
Like a thousand dawns on a single night
The splendours rise and spread;
And through thunder and darkness dread
Light and music are radiated,
And in their pavilioned chariots led
By living wings high overhead
The giant Powers move,
Gloomy or bright as the thrones they fill.

. . . . .

A chaos of light and motion
Upon that glassy ocean.

. . . . .

The senate of the Gods is met,
Each in his rank and station set;
There is silence in the spaces—
Lo! Satan, Christ, and Mahomet
Start from their places!

Christ. Almighty Father!
Low-kneeling at the feet of Destiny

. . . . . .

There are two fountains in which spirits weep
When mortals err, Discord and Slavery named.

And with their bitter dew two Destinies
Filled each their irrevocable urns; the third,
Fiercest and mightiest, mingled both, and added
Chaos and Death, and slow Oblivion's lymph,
And hate and terror, and the poisoned rain

. . . . . .

The Aurora of the nations. By this brow
Whose pores wept tears of blood, by these wide wounds,
By this imperial crown of agony,
By infamy and solitude and death,
For this I underwent, and by the pain
Of pity for those who would   for me
The unremembered joy of a revenge,
For this I felt—by Plato's sacred light,
Of which my spirit was a burning morrow—
By Greece and all she cannot cease to be,
Her quenchless words, sparks of immortal truth,
Stars of all night—her harmonies and forms,
Echoes and shadows of what Love adores
In thee, I do compel thee, send forth Fate,
Thy irrevocable child: let her descend,
A seraph-wingèd Victory [arrayed]
In tempest of the omnipotence of God
Which sweeps through all things.

From hollow leagues, from Tyranny which arms
Adverse miscreeds and emulous anarchies
To stamp, as on a wingèd serpent's seed,
Upon the name of Freedom; from the storm
Of faction, which like earthquake shakes and sickens
The solid heart of enterprise; from all
By which the holiest dreams of highest spirits
Are stars beneath the dawn . . .
                                        she shall arise
Victorious as the world arose from Chaos!
And as the Heavens and the Earth arrayed
Their presence in the beauty and the light
Of Thy first smile, O Father,—as they gather
The spirit of Thy love which paves for them
Their path o'er the abyss, till every sphere
Shall be one living Spirit,—so shall Greece—
  Satan. Be as all things beneath the empyrean,
Mine! Art thou eyeless like old Destiny,
Thou mockery-king, crowned with a wreath of thorns?
Whose sceptre is a reed, the broken reed
Which pierces thee! whose throne a chair of scorn;
For seest thou not beneath this crystal floor
The innumerable worlds of golden light
Which are my empire, and the least of them
        which thou wouldst redeem from me?
Know'st thou not them my portion?
Or wouldst rekindle the   strife
Which our great Father then did arbitrate

When he assigned to his competing sons
Each his apportioned realm ?
Thou Destiny,
Thou who art mailed in the omnipotence
Of Him who sends thee forth, whate'er thy task,
Speed, spare not to accomplish, and be mine
Thy trophies,—whether Greece again become
The fountain in the desert whence the earth
Shall drink of freedom, which shall give it strength
To suffer,—or a gulf of hollow death
To swallow all delight, all life, all hope.
Go, thou Vicegerent of my will, no less
Than of the Father's ; but lest thou shouldst faint,
The wingèd hounds, Famine and Pestilence,
Shall wait on thee, the hundred-forkèd snake
Insatiate Superstition still shall . . .
The earth behind thy steps, and War shall hover
Above, and Fraud shall gape below, and Change
Shall flit before thee on her dragon wings,
Convulsing and consuming, and I add
Three vials of the tears which daemons weep
When virtuous spirits through the gate of Death
Pass triumphing over the thorns of life,
Sceptres and crowns, mitres and swords and snares,
Trampling in scorn, like Him and Socrates.
The first is Anarchy ; when Power and Pleasure,
Glory and Science and Security,
On Freedom hang like fruit on the green tree,
Then pour it forth, and men shall gather ashes.
The second Tyranny—
Christ. Obdurate spirit !
Thou seest but the Past in the To-come.
Pride is thy error and thy punishment.
Boast not thine empire, dream not that thy worlds
Are more than furnace sparks or rainbow-drops
Before the Power that wields and kindles them.
True greatness asks not space, true excellence
Lives in the Spirit of all things that live,
Which lends it to the worlds thou callest thine.

. . . .

Mahomet. . . . Haste thou and fill the waning crescent
With beams as keen as those which pierced the shadow
Of Christian night rolled back upon the West,
When the orient moon of Islam rode in triumph
From Tmolus to the Acroceraunian snow.

. . . .

Wake, thou Word
Of God, and from the throne of Destiny
Even to the utmost limit of thy way
May triumph

. . . .

Be thou a curse on them whose creed
Divides and multiplies the most high God.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MAHMUD. DAOOD.
HASSAN. AHASUERUS, *a Jew.*
CHORUS *of Greek Captive Women.* [*The Phantom of Mahomet II.*]
Messengers, Slaves, and Attendants. SCENE, *Constantinople.*
TIME, *Sunset.*

SCENE.—*A terrace on the Seraglio.* MAHMUD *sleeping, an Indian Slave sitting beside his Couch*

Chorus of Greek Captive Women

WE strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stripped from Orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep!

Indian

Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep!
Be his, as Heaven seems,
Clear, and bright, and deep!
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.

Chorus

Sleep, sleep! our song is laden
With the soul of slumber;
It was sung by a Samian maiden,
Whose lover was of the number
Who now keep
That calm sleep
Whence none may wake, where none shall weep.

Indian

I touch thy temples pale!
I breathe my soul on thee!
And could my prayers avail,
All my joy should be
Dead, and I would live to weep,
So thou mightest win one hour of quiet sleep.

Chorus

Breathe low—low
The spell of the mighty mistress now!
When Conscience lulls her sated snake,
And tyrants sleep, let Freedom wake.
Breathe low—low
The words which, like secret fire, shall flow
Through the veins of the frozen earth—low, low

Semichorus I

Life may change, but it may fly not;
Hope may vanish, but can die not;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
Love repulsed,—but it returneth!

Semichorus II

Yet were life a charnel where
Hope lay coffined with Despair;
Yet were truth a sacred lie,
Love were lust—

Semichorus I

If Liberty
Lent not life its soul of light,
Hope its iris of delight,
Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
Love its power to give and bear.

Chorus

In the great morning of the world,
The Spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
And all its banded anarchs fled,
Like vultures frighted from Imaus,
Before an earthquake's tread.—
So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone:—
Thermopylae and Marathon
Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
The springing Fire.—The wingèd glory
On Philippi half-alighted,
Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan
The quenchless ashes of Milan. (1)

From age to age, from man to man,
It lived; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.

Then night fell; and, as from night,
Reassuming fiery flight,
From the West swift Freedom came,
Against the course of Heaven and doom,
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illume.
From far Atlantis its young beams
Chased the shadows and the dreams.
France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not; again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain.

As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempest's warning,
When she seeks her aerie hanging
In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging
Of her wings through the wild air,
Sick with famine:—Freedom, so,
To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns; her hoary ruins glow
Like Orient mountains lost in day;
Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings prey,
And in the naked lightenings
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies,
A Desert, or a Paradise:
Let the beautiful and the brave
Share her glory, or a grave.

Semichorus I

With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew;

Semichorus II

With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew!

Semichorus I

With an orphan's affection
  She followed thy bier through Time;

Semichorus II

And at thy resurrection
  Reappeareth, like thou, sublime!

Semichorus I

If Heaven should resume thee,
  To Heaven shall her spirit ascend;

Semichorus II

If Hell should entomb thee,
  To Hell shall her high hearts bend.

Semichorus I

If Annihilation——

Semichorus II

  Dust let her glories be!
And a name and a nation
  Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee!

Indian

His brows grow darker—breathe not—move not!
He starts—he shudders—ye that love not,
  With your panting loud and fast,
  Have awakened him at last.

Mahmud (*starting from his sleep*). Man the Seraglio-guard! make fast the gate!
What! from a cannonade of three short hours?
'Tis false! that breach towards the Bosphorus
Cannot be practical yet—who stirs?
Stand to the match; that when the foe prevails
One spark may mix in reconciling ruin
The conqueror and the conquered! Heave the tower
Into the gap—wrench off the roof!
  (*Enter* HASSAN.) Ha! what!
The truth of day lightens upon my dream
And I am Mahmud still.
  Hassan. Your Sublime Highness
Is strangely moved.
  Mahmud. The times do cast strange shadows

On those who watch and who must rule their course,
Lest they, being first in peril as in glory,
Be whelmed in the fierce ebb :—and these are of them.
Thrice has a gloomy vision hunted me
As thus from sleep into the troubled day;
It shakes me as the tempest shakes the sea,
Leaving no figure upon memory's glass.
Would that——no matter. Thou didst say thou knewest
A Jew, whose spirit is a chronicle
Of strange and secret and forgotten things.
I bade thee summon him :—'tis said his tribe
Dream, and are wise interpreters of dreams.
Hassan. The Jew of whom I spake is old,—so old
He seems to have outlived a world's decay;
The hoary mountains and the wrinkled ocean
Seem younger still than he;—his hair and beard
Are whiter than the tempest-sifted snow;
His cold pale limbs and pulseless arteries
Are like the fibres of a cloud instinct
With light, and to the soul that quickens them
Are as the atoms of the mountain-drift
To the winter wind :—but from his eye looks forth
A life of unconsumèd thought which pierces
The Present, and the Past, and the To-come.
Some say that this is he whom the great prophet
Jesus, the sun of Joseph, for his mockery,
Mocked with the curse of immortality.
Some feign that he is Enoch. Others dream
He was pre-adamite and has survived
Cycles of generation and of ruin.
The sage, in truth, by dreadful abstinence
And conquering penance of the mutinous flesh,
Deep contemplation, and unwearied study,
In years outstretched beyond the date of man,
May have attained to sovereignty and science
Over those strong and secret things and thoughts
Which others fear and know not.
Mahmud. I would talk
With this old Jew.
Hassan. Thy will is even now
Made known to him, where he dwells in a sea-cavern
'Mid the Demonesi, less accessible
Than thou or God! He who would question him
Must sail alone at sunset, where the stream

Of Ocean sleeps around those foamless isles,
When the young moon is westering as now,
And evening airs wander upon the wave;
And when the pines of that bee-pasturing isle,
Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow
Of his gilt prow within the sapphire water,
Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud
"Ahasuerus!" and the caverns round
Will answer "Ahasuerus!" If his prayer
Be granted, a faint meteor will arise
Lighting him over Marmora, and a wind
Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,
And with the wind a storm of harmony
Unutterably sweet, and pilot him
Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus:
Thence at the hour and place and circumstance
Fit for the matter of their conference
The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare
Win the desired communion—but that shout
Bodes—— [*A shout within.*

Mahmud. Evil, doubtless; like all human sounds.
Let me converse with spirits. [*Another shout.*

Hassan. That shout again.

Mahmud. This Jew whom thou hast summoned—

Hassan. Will be here—

Mahmud. When the omnipotent hour to which are yoked
He, I, and all things shall compel—enough!
Silence those mutineers—that drunken crew,
That crowd about the pilot in the storm.
Ay! strike the foremost shorter by a head!
They weary me, and I have need of rest,
Kings are like stars—they rise and set, they have
The worship of the world, but no repose. [*Exeunt severally.*

Chorus (2)

Worlds on world are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
But they are still immortal
Who, through birth's orient portal
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light

Gathered round their chariots as they go;
    New shapes they still may weave,
    New gods, new laws receive,
Bright or dim are they as the robes they last
    On Death's bare ribs had cast.

  A power from the unknown God,
    A Promethean conqueror, came;
  Like a triumphal path he trod
    The thorns of death and shame.
    A mortal shape to him
    Was like the vapour dim
  Which the orient planet animates with light;
      Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
      Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
  Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight;
      The moon of Mahomet
      Arose, and it shall set:
  While blazoned as on Heaven's immortal noon
    The cross leads generations on.

      Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
        From one whose dreams are Paradise
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
  And Day peers forth with her blank eyes;
  So fleet, so faint, so fair,
  The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding-star of Bethlehem:
  Apollo, Pan, and Love,
  And even Olympian Jove
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them;
  Our hills and seas and streams,
  Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
  Wailed for the golden years.

Enter MAHMUD, HASSAN, DAOOD, *and others*

Mahmud. More gold? our ancestors bought gold with victory,
And shall I sell it for defeat?
  Daood. The Janizars
Clamour for pay.
  Mahmud. Go! bid them pay themselves
With Christian blood! Are there no Grecian virgins

Whose shrieks and spasms and tears they may enjoy?
No infidel children to impale on spears?
No hoary priests after that Patriarch (3)
Who bent the curse against his country's heart,
Which clove his own at last? Go! bid them kill,
Blood is the seed of gold.
Daood. It has been sown,
And yet the harvest to the sicklemen
Is as a grain to each.
Mahmud. Then, take this signet,
Unlock the seventh chamber in which lie
The treasures of victorious Solyman,—
An empire's spoil stored for a day of ruin.
O spirit of my sires! is it not come?
The prey-birds and the wolves are gorged and sleep;
But these, who spread their feast on the red earth,
Hunger for gold, which fills not.—See them fed;
Then, lead them to the rivers of fresh death. [*Exit* DAOOD.
O miserable dawn, after a night
More glorious than the day which it usurped!
O faith in God! O power on earth! O word
Of the great prophet, whose o'ershadowing wings
Darkened the thrones and idols of the West,
Now bright!—For thy sake cursèd be the hour,
Even as a father by an evil child,
When the orient moon of Islam rolled in triumph
From Caucasus to White Ceraunia!
Ruin above, and anarchy below;
Terror without, and treachery within;
The Chalice of destruction full, and all,
Thirsting to drink; and who among us dares
To dash it from his lips? and where is Hope?
Hassan. The lamp of our dominion still rides high;
One God is God—Mahomet is His prophet.
Four hundred thousand Moslems, from the limits
Of utmost Asia, irresistibly
Throng, like full clouds at the Sirocco's cry;
But not like them to weep their strength in tears:
They bear destroying lightning, and their step
Wakes earthquake to consume and overwhelm,
And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
Tmolus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
With horrent arms; and lofty ships even now,
Like vapours anchored to a mountain's edge,

Freighted with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala
The convoy of the ever-veering wind.
Samos is drunk with blood ;—the Greek has paid
Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far,
When the fierce shout of "Allah-illa-Allah!"
Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind
Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm.
So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day!
If night is mute, yet the returning sun
Kindles the voices of the morning birds;
Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
Than birds rejoicing in the golden day,
The Anarchies of Africa unleash
Their tempest-wingèd cities of the sea,
To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
Like sulphurous clouds, half-shattered by the storm.
They sweep the pale Aegean, while the Queen
Of Ocean, bound upon her island-throne,
Far in the West, sits mourning that her sons
Who frown on Freedom spare a smile for thee:
Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
To stoop upon the victor ;—for she fears
The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine.
But recreant Austria loves thee as the Grave
Loves Pestilence, and her slow dogs of war,
Fleshed with the chase, come up from Italy,
And howl upon their limits; for they see
The panther, Freedom, fled to her old cover,
Amid seas and mountains, and a mightier brood
Crouch round. What Anarch wears a crown or mitre,
Or bears the sword, or grasps the key of gold,
Whose friends are not thy friends, whose foes thy foes?
Our arsenals and our armouries are full;
Our forts defy assault; ten thousand cannon
Lie ranged upon the beach, and hour by hour
Their earth-convulsing wheels affright the city;
The galloping of fiery steeds makes pale
The Christian merchant; and the yellow Jew
Hides his hoard deeper in the faithless earth.
Like clouds, and like the shadows of the clouds,

Over the hills of Anatolia,
Swift in wide troops the tartar chivalry
Sweep;—the far flashing of their starry lances
Reverberates the dying light of day,
We have one God, one King, one Hope, one Law;
But many-headed Insurrection stands
Divided in itself, and soon must fall.

Mahmud. Proud words, when deeds come short, are seasonable:
Look, Hassan, on yon crescent moon, emblazoned
Upon that shattered flag of fiery cloud
Which leads the rear of the departing day;
Wan emblem of an empire fading now!
See how it trembles in the blood-red air,
And like a mighty lamp whose oil is spent
Shrinks on the horizon's edge, while, from above,
One star with insolent and victorious light
Hovers above its fall, and with keen beams,
Like arrows through a fainting antelope,
Strikes its weak form to death.

Hassan. Even as that moon
Renews itself——

Mahmud. Shall we be not renewed!
Far other bark than ours were needed now
To stem the torrent of descending time:
The Spirit that lifts the slave before his lord
Stalks through the capitals of armèd kings,
And spreads his ensign in the wilderness:
Exults in chains; and, when the rebel falls,
Cries like the blood of Abel from the dust;
And the inheritors of the earth, like beasts
When earthquake is unleashed, with idiot fear
Cower in their kingly dens—as I do now.
What were Defeat when Victory must appal?
Or Danger, when Security looks pale?—
How said the messenger—who, from the fort
Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
Of Bucharest?—that—

Hassan. Ibrahim's scimitar
Drew with its gleam swift victory from Heaven,
To burn before him in the night of battle—
A light and a destruction.

Mahmud. Ay! the day
Was ours: but how?——

Hassan. The light Wallachians,
The Arnaut, Servian, and Albanian allies
Fled from the glance of our artillery
Almost before the thunderstone alit.
One half the Grecian army made a bridge
Of safe and slow retreat, with Moslem dead;
The other—
Mahmud. Speak—tremble not.—
Hassan. islanded
By victor myriads, formed in hollow square
With rough and steadfast front, and thrice flung back
The deluge of our foaming cavalry;
Thrice their keen wedge of battle pierced our lines.
Our baffled army trembled like one man
Before a host, and gave them space; but soon,
From the surrounding hills, the batteries blazed,
Kneading them down with fire and iron rain:
Yet none approached; till, like a field of corn
Under the hook of the swart sickleman,
The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,
Grew weak and few.—Then said the Pacha, "Slaves,
Render yourselves—they have abandoned you—
What hope of refuge, or retreat, or aid?
We grant your lives." "Grant that which is thine own!"
Cried one, and fell upon his sword and died!
Another—"God, and man, and hope abandon me;
But I to them, and to myself, remain
Constant":—he bowed his head, and his heart burst.
A third exclaimed, "There is a refuge, tyrant,
Where thou darest not pursue, and canst not harm
Shouldst thou pursue; there we shall meet again."
Then held his breath, and, after a brief spasm,
The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment
Among the slain—dead earth upon the earth!
So these survivors, each by different ways,
Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable,
Met in triumphant death; and when our army
Closed in, while yet wonder, and awe, and shame
Held back the base hyaenas of the battle
That feed upon the dead and fly the living,
One rose out of the chaos of the slain:
And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit
Of the old saviours of the land we rule
Had lifted in its anger, wandering by,—

Or if there burned within the dying man
Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith
Creating what it feigned,—I cannot tell—
But he cried, "Phantoms of the free, we come!
Armies of the Eternal, ye who strike
To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts,
And thaw their frostwork diadems like dew;—
O ye who float around this clime, and weave
The garment of the glory which it wears,
Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasped,
Lies sepulchred in monumental thought;—
Progenitors of all that yet is great,
Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept
In your high ministrations, us, your sons—
Us first, and the more glorious yet to come!
And ye, weak conquerors! giants who look pale
When the crushed worm rebels beneath your tread,
The vultures and the dogs, your pensioners tame,
Are overgorged; but, like oppressors, still
They crave the relic of Destruction's feast.
The exhalations and the thirsty winds
Are sick with blood; the dew is foul with death;
Heaven's light is quenched in slaughter: thus, where'er
Upon your camps, cities, or towers, or fleets,
The obscene birds the reeking remnant cast
Of these dead limbs,—upon your streams and mountains,
Upon your fields, your gardens, and your housetops,
Where'er the winds shall creep, or the clouds fly,
Or the dews fall, or the angry sun look down
With poisoned light—Famine, and Pestilence,
And Panic, shall wage war upon our side!
Nature from all her boundaries is moved
Against ye: Time has found ye light as foam.
The Earth rebels; and Good and Evil stake
Their empire o'er the unborn world of men
On this one cast;—but ere the die be thrown,
The renovated genius of our race,
Proud umpire of the impious game, descends,
A seraph-wingèd Victory, bestriding
The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom,
And you to oblivion!"—More he would have said,
But—

Mahmud. Died—as thou shouldst ere thy lips had painted
Their ruin in the hues of our success.
A rebel's crime, gilt with a rebel's tongue!
Your heart is Greek, Hassan.
Hassan. It may be so:
A spirit not my own wrenched me within,
And I have spoken words I fear and hate;
Yet would I die for—
Mahmud. Live! oh live! outlive
Me and this sinking empire. But the fleet—
Hassan. Alas!——
Mahmud. The fleet which, like a flock of clouds
Chased by the wind, flies the insurgent banner!
Our wingèd castles from their merchant ships!
Our myriads before their weak pirate bands!
Our arms before their chains! our years of empire
Before their centuries of servile fear!
Death is awake! Repulse is on the waters!
They own no more the thunder-bearing banner
Of Mahmud; but, like hounds of a base breed,
Gorge from a stranger's hand, and rend their master.
Hassan. Latmos, and Ampelos, and Phanae saw
The wreck——
Mahmud. The caves of the Icarian isles
Told each to the other in loud mockery,
And with the tongue as of a thousand echoes,
First of the sea-convulsing fight—and, then,—
Thou darest to speak—senseless are the mountains:
Interpret thou their voice!
Hassan. My presence bore
A part in that day's shame. The Grecian fleet
Bore down at daybreak from the North, and hung
As multitudinous on the ocean line,
As cranes upon the cloudless Thracian wind.
Our squadron, convoying ten thousand men,
Was stretching towards Nauplia when the battle
Was kindled.—
First through the hail of our artillery
The agile Hydriote barks with press of sail
Dashed:—ship to ship, cannon to cannon, man
To man were grappled in the embrace of war,
Inextricable but by death or victory.
The tempest of the raging fight convulsed
To its crystàlline depths that stainless sea,

And shook Heaven's roof of golden morning clouds,
Poised on an hundred azure mountain-isles.
In the brief trances of the artillery
One cry from the destroyed and the destroyer
Rose, and a cloud of desolation wrapped
The unforeseen event, till the north wind
Sprung from the sea, lifting the heavy veil
Of battle-smoke—then victory—victory!
For, as we thought, three frigates from Algiers
Bore down from Naxos to our aid, but soon
The abhorrèd cross glimmered behind, before,
Among, around us; and that fatal sign
Dried with its beams the strength in Moslem hearts,
As the sun drinks the dew.—What more? We fled!—
Our noonday path over the sanguine foam
Was beaconed,—and the glare struck the sun pale,—
By our consuming transports: the fierce light
Made all the shadows of our sails blood-red,
And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding
The ravening fire, even to the water's level;
Some were blown up; some, settling heavily,
Sunk; and the shrieks of our companions died
Upon the wind, that bore us fast and far,
Even after they were dead. Nine thousand perished!
We met the vultures legioned in the air
Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind;
They, screaming from their cloudy mountain-peaks,
Stooped through the sulphurous battle-smoke and perched
Each on the weltering carcase that we loved,
Like its ill angel or its damnèd soul,
Riding upon the bosom of the sea.
We saw the dog-fish hastening to their feast.
Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea,
And ravening Famine left his ocean cave
To dwell with War, with us, and with Despair.
We met night three hours to the west of Patmos,
And with night, tempest——
Mahmud. Cease!

Enter a Messenger

Messenger. Your Sublime Highness,
That Christian hound, the Muscovite Ambassador,
Has left the city.—If the rebel fleet
Had anchored in the port, had victory

Crowned the Greek legions in the Hippodrome,
Panic were tamer.—Obedience and Mutiny,
Like giants in contention planet-struck,
Stand gazing on each other.—There is peace
In Stamboul.—

Mahmud. Is the grave not calmer still?
Its ruins shall be mine.

Hassan. Fear not the Russian:
The tiger leagues not with the stag at bay
Against the hunter.—Cunning, base, and cruel,
He crouches, watching till the spoil be won,
And must be paid for his reserve in blood.
After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian
That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion
Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields,
Rivers and seas, like that which we may win,
But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves!

Enter second Messenger

Second Messenger. Nauplia, Tripolizza, Mothon, Athens,
Navarin, Artas, Monembasia,
Corinth, and Thebes are carried by assault,
And every Islamite who made his dogs
Fat with the flesh of Galilean slaves
Passed at the edge of the sword: the lust of blood,
Which made our warriors drunk, is quenched in death;
But like a fiery plague breaks out anew
In deeds which make the Christian cause look pale
In its own light. The garrison of Patras
Has store but for ten days, nor is there hope
But from the Briton: at once slave and tyrant,
His wishes still are weaker than his fears,
Or he would sell what faith may yet remain
From the oaths broke in Genoa and in Norway;
And if you buy him not, your treasury
Is empty even of promises—his own coin.
The freedman of a western poet-chief (4)
Holds Attica with seven thousand rebels,
And has beat back the Pacha of Negropont:
The agèd Ali sits in Yanina
A crownless metaphor of empire:
His name, that shadow of his withered might,
Holds our besieging army like a spell
In pray to famine, pest, and mutiny;

He, bastioned in his citadel, looks forth
Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors
The ruins of the city where he reigned
Childless and sceptreless. The Greek has reaped
The costly harvest his own blood matured,
Not the sower, Ali—who has bought a truce
From Ypsilanti with ten camel-loads
Of Indian gold.

Enter a third Messenger

Mahmud. What more?

Third Messenger. The Christian tribes
Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness
Are in revolt;—Damascus, Hems, Aleppo
Tremble;—the Arab menaces Medina,
The Aethiop has intrenched himself in Sennaar,
And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employed,
Who denies homage, claims investiture
As price of tardy aid. Persia demands
The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians
Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,
Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins
Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake-spasm,
Shake in the general fever. Through the city,
Like birds before a storm, the Santons shriek,
And prophesyings horrible and new
Are heard among the crowd: that sea of men
Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.
A Dervise, learnèd in the Koran, preaches
That it is written how the sins of Islam
Must raise up a destroyer even now.
The Greeks expect a Saviour from the West, (5)
Who shall not come, men say, in clouds and glory,
But in the omnipresence of that Spirit
In which all live and are. Ominous signs
Are blazoned broadly on the noonday sky:
One saw a red cross stamped upon the sun;
It has rained blood; and monstrous births declare
The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord.
The army encamped upon the Cydaris
Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,
The shadows doubtless of the unborn time
Cast on the mirror of the night. While yet

The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
At the third watch the Spirit of the Plague
Was heard abroad flapping among the tents;
Those who relieved watch found the sentinels dead.
The last news from the camp is, that a thousand
Have sickened, and——

Enter a fourth Messenger

Mahmud. And thou, pale ghost, dim shadow
Of some untimely rumour, speak!
Fourth Messenger. One comes
Fainting with toil, covered with foam and blood:
He stood, he says, on Chelonites'
Promontory, which o'erlooks the isles that groan
Under the Briton's frown, and all their waters
Then trembling in the splendour of the moon,
When as the wandering clouds unveiled or hid
Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets
Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
Mingling fierce thunders and sulphureous gleams,
And smoke which strangled every infant wind
That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
At length the battle slept, but the Sirocco
Awoke, and drove his flock of thunder-clouds
Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
All objects—save that in the faint moon-glimpse
He saw, or dreamed he saw, the Turkish admiral
And two the loftiest of our ships of war,
With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven,
Who hid, perhaps, her face for grief, reversed;
And the abhorrèd cross—

Enter an Attendant

Attendant. Your Sublime Highness,
The Jew, who——
Mahmud. Could not come more seasonably:
Bid him attend. I'll hear no more! too long
We gaze on danger through the mist of fear,
And multiply upon our shattered hopes
The images of ruin. Come what will!
To-morrow and to-morrow are as lamps
Set in our path to light us to the edge

Through rough and smooth, nor can we suffer aught
Which He inflicts not in whose hand we are. [*Exeunt.*

Semichorus I

Would I were the wingèd cloud
Of a tempest swift and loud!
I would scorn
The smile of morn
And the wave where the moonrise is born!
I would leave
The spirits of eve
A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave
From other threads than mine!
Bask in the deep blue noon divine
Who would? Not I.

Semichorus II

Whither to fly?

Semichorus I

Where the rocks that gird th' Aegean
Echo to the battle paean
Of the free—
I would flee.
A tempestuous herald of victory!
My golden rain
For the Grecian slain
Should mingle in tears with the bloody main,
And my solemn thunder-knell
Should ring to the world the passing-bell
Of Tyranny!

Semichorus II

Ah king! wilt thou chain
The rack and the rain?
Wilt thou fetter the lightning and hurricane?
The storms are free,
But we—

Chorus.

O Slavery! thou frost of the world's prime,
Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare!
Thy touch has stamped these limbs with crime,
These brows thy branding garland bear,
But the free heart, the impassive soul
Scorn thy control!

Semichorus I

Let there be light! said Liberty,
And like sunrise from the sea,
Athens arose!—Around her born,
Shone like mountains in the morn
Glorious states;—and are they now
Ashes, wrecks, oblivion?

Semichorus II

Go,
Where Thermae and Asopus swallowed
  Persia, as the sand does foam;
Deluge upon deluge followed,
  Discord, Macedon, and Rome:
And lastly thou!

Semichorus I

Temples and towers,
  Citadels and marts, and they
Who live and die there, have been ours,
  And may be thine, and must decay;
But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity;
Her citizens, imperial spirits,
  Rule the present from the past,
On all this world of men inherits
  Their seal is set.

Semichorus II

Hear ye the blast,
  Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls
  From ruin her Titanian walls?
Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
  Of Slavery? Argos, Corinth, Crete
Hear, and from their mountain thrones
  The daemons and the nymphs repeat
The harmony.

Semichorus I

I hear! I hear!

Semichorus II

The world's eyeless charioteer,
    Destiny, is hurrying by!

What faith is crushed, what empire bleeds
Beneath her earthquake-footed steeds?
What eagle-wingèd victory sits
At her right hand? what shadow flits
   Before? what splendour rolls behind?
         Ruin and renovation cry
"Who but We?"

Semichorus I

I hear! I hear!
   The hiss as of a rushing wind,
The roar as of an ocean foaming,
The thunder as of earthquake coming.
I hear! I hear!
The crash as of an empire falling,
The shrieks as of a people calling
"Mercy! mercy!"—How they thrill!
Then a shout of "kill! kill! kill!"
And then a small still voice, thus—

Semichorus II

For
Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind,
   The foul cubs like their parents are,
Their den is in the guilty mind,
   And Conscience feeds them with despair.

Semichorus I

In sacred Athens, near the fane
   Of Wisdom, Pity's altar stood:
Serve not the unknown God in vain,
But pay that broken shrine again,
   Love for hate and tears for blood.

Enter Mahmud *and* Ahasuerus

Mahmud. Thou art a man, thou sayest, even as we.
Ahasuerus. No more!
Mahmud. But raised above thy fellow-men
By thought, as I by power.
Ahasuerus. Thou sayest so.
Mahmud. Thou art an adept in the difficult lore
Of Greek and Frank philosophy; thou numberest
The flowers, and thou measurest the stars;
Thou severest element from element;

Thy spirit is present in the Past, and sees
The birth of this old world through all its cycles
Of desolation and of loveliness,
And when man was not, and how man became
The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,
And all its narrow circles—it is much—
I honour thee, and would be what thou art
Were I not what I am; but the unborn hour,
Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
Who shall unveil? Nor thou, nor I, nor any
Mighty or wise. I apprehended not
What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
That thou art no interpreter of dreams;
Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
Can make the Future present—let it come!
Moreover thou disdainest us and ours;
Thou art as God, whom thou contemplatest.

Ahasuerus. Disdain thee?—not the worm beneath thy feet!
The Fathomless has care for meaner things
Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
Who would be what they may not, or would seem
That which they are not. Sultan! talk no more
Of thee and me, the Future and the Past;
But look on that which cannot change—the One,
The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
With all its cressets of immortal fire,
Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably
Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this Whole
Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is but a vision;—all that it inherits
Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams;
Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
The Future and the Past are idle shadows
Of thought's eternal flight—they have no being:
Nought is but that which feels itself to be.

Mahmud. What meanest thou? Thy words stream like a tempest

Of dazzling mist within my brain—they shake
The earth on which I stand, and hang like night
On Heaven above me. What can they avail?
They cast on all things surest, brightest, best,
Doubt, insecurity, astonishment.
Ahasuerus. Mistake me not! All is contained in each.
Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
Is that which has been, or will be, to that
Which is—the absent to the present. Thought
Alone, and its quick elements, Will, Passion,
Reason, Imagination, cannot die;
They are, what that which they regard appears,
The stuff whence mutability can weave
All that it hath dominion o'er, worlds, worms,
Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
To do with time, or place, or circumstance?
Wouldst thou behold the Future?—ask and have!
Knock and it shall be opened—look, and lo!
The coming age is shadowed on the Past
As on a glass.
Mahmud. Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
My spirit—Did not Mahomet the Second
Win Stamboul?
Ahasuerus. Thou wouldst ask that giant spirit
The written fortunes of thy house and faith.
Thou wouldst cite one out of the grave to tell
How what was born in blood must die.
Mahmud. Thy words
Have power on me! I see——
Ahasuerus. What hearest thou?
Mahmud. A far whisper——
Terrible silence.
Ahasuerus. What succeeds?
Mahmud. The sound
As of the assault of an imperial city, (6)
The hiss of inextinguishable fire,
The roar of giant cannon; the earthquaking
Fall of vast bastions and precipitous towers,
The shock of crags shot from strange enginery,
The clash of wheels, and clang of armèd hoofs,
And crash of brazen mail as of the wreck
Of adamantine mountains—the mad blast
Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds,
The shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood,

And one sweet laugh, most horrible to hear,
As of a joyous infant waked and playing
With its dead mother's breast, and now more loud
The mingled battle-cry,—ha! hear I not
"'Εν τούτῳ νίκη!" "Allah-illa-Allah!"?

Ahasuerus. The sulphurous mist is raised—thou seest—

Mahmud. A chasm,
As of two mountains, in the wall of Stamboul;
And in that ghastly breach the Islamites,
Like giants on the ruins of a world,
Stand in the light of sunrise. In the dust
Glimmers a kingless diadem, and one
Of regal port has cast himself beneath
The stream of war. Another proudly clad
In golden arms spurs a Tartarian barb
Into the gap, and with his iron mace
Directs the torrent of that tide of men,
And seems—he is—Mahomet!

Ahasuerus. What thou seest
Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream.
A dream itself, yet less, perhaps, than that
Thou call'st reality. Thou mayst behold
How cities, on which Empire sleeps enthroned,
Bow their towered crests to mutability.
Poised by the flood, e'en on the height thou holdest,
Thou mayst now learn how the full tide of power
Ebbs to its depths.—Inheritor of glory,
Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourished
With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throes
Of that whose birth was but the same. The Past
Now stands before thee like an Incarnation
Of the To-come; yet wouldst thou commune with
That portion of thyself which was ere thou
Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death,
Dissolve with that strong faith and fervent passion
Which called it from the uncreated deep,
Yon cloud of war, with its tempestuous phantoms
Of raging death; and draw with mighty will
The imperial shade hither. [*Exit* AHASUERUS. *The Phantom of* MAHOMET THE SECOND *appears.*

Mahmud. Approach!

Phantom. I come
Thence whither thou must go! The grave is fitter
To take the living than give up the dead;

Yet has thy faith prevailed, and I am here.
The heavy fragments of the power which fell
When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices
Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
Wailing for glory never to return.—
A later Empire nods in its decay:
The autumn of a greener faith is come,
And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
The foliage in which Fame, the eagle, built
Her aerie, while Dominion whelped below.
The storm is in its branches, and the frost
Is on its leaves, and the blank deep expects
Oblivion on oblivion, spoil on spoil,
Ruin on ruin:—Thou art slow, my son;
The Anarchs of the world of darkness keep
A throne for thee, round which thine empire lies
Boundless and mute; and for thy subjects thou,
Like us, shalt rule the ghosts of murdered life,
The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now—
Mutinous passions, and conflicting fears,
And hopes that sate themselves on dust, and die!—
Stripped of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
Islam must fall, but we will reign together
Over its ruins in the world of death:—
And if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
Unfold itself even in the shape of that
Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe! woe!
To the weak people tangled in the grasp
Of its last spasms.
Mahmud. Spirit, woe to all!
Woe to the wronged and the avenger! Woe
To the destroyer, woe to the destroyed!
Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver!
Woe to the oppressed, and woe to the oppressor!
Woe both to those that suffer and inflict;
Those who are born and those who die! but say,
Imperial shadow of the thing I am,
When, how, by whom, Destruction must accomplish
Her consummation!
Phantom. Ask the cold pale Hour,
Rich in reversion of impending death,
When *he* shall fall upon whose ripe grey hairs
Sit Care, and Sorrow, and Infirmity—

The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with years,
Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart
Over the heads of men, under which burthen
They bow themselves unto the grave: fond wretch!
He leans upon his crutch, and talks of years
To come, and how in hours of youth renewed
He will renew lost joys, and——

Voice without. Victory! Victory!

[*The Phantom vanishes.*

Mahmud. What sound of the importunate earth has broken
My mighty trance?

Voice without. Victory! Victory!

Mahmud. Weak lightning before darkness! Poor faint smile
Of dying Islam! Voice which art the response
Of hollow weakness! Do I wake and live?
Were there such things, or may the unquiet brain,
Vexed by the wise mad talk of the old Jew,
Have shaped itself these shadows of its fear?
It matters not!—for nought we see or dream,
Possess, or lose, or grasp at, can be worth
More than it gives or teaches. Come what may,
The Future must become the Past, and I
As they were to whom once this present hour,
This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
Seemed an Elysian isle of peace and joy
Never to be attained.—I must rebuke
This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
And dying, bring despair. Victory! poor slaves!

[*Exit* MAHMUD.

Voice without. Shout in the jubilee of death! The Greeks
Are as a brood of lions in the net
Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
Stand smiling. Anarchs, ye whose daily food
Are curses, groans, and gold, the fruit of death,
From Thule to the girdle of the world,
Come, feast! the board groans with the flesh of men;
The cup is foaming with the nation's blood,
Famine and Thirst await! eat, drink, and die!

Semichorus I (7)

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,

Salutes the rising sun, pursues the flying day!
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.
Who shall impede her flight?
Who rob her of her prey?
Voice without. Victory! Victory! Russia's famished eagles
Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

Semichorus II

Thou voice which art
The herald of the ill in splendour hid!
Thou echo of the hollow heart
Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed:
Oh, bear me to those isles of jaggèd cloud
Which float like mountains on the earthquake, mid
The momentary oceans of the lightning,
Or to some toppling promontory proud
Of solid tempest whose black pyramid,
Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning
Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
Before their waves expire,
When heaven and earth are light, and only light
In the thunder-night!
Voice without. Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,
And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs speak.
Ho, there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes,
These chains are light, fitter for slaves and prisoners
Than Greeks. Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain.

Semichorus I

Alas! for Liberty!
If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
Or fate, can quell the free!
Alas! for Virtue, when
Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
Of erring judging men

Can break the heart where it abides.
Alas! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,
Can change with its false times and tides,
Like hope and terror,—
Alas for Love!
And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
Alas for thee! Image of the Above.

Semichorus II

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
Through many an hostile Anarchy!
At length they wept aloud, and cried, "The Sea! the Sea!"
Through exile, persecution, and despair,
Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become
The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb
Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair:
But Greece was as a hermit-child,
Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
To woman's growth, by dreams so mild,
She knew not pain or guilt;
And now, O Victory, blush! and Empire, tremble
When ye desert the free—
If Greece must be
A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
And build themselves again impregnably
In a diviner clime,
To Amphionic music on some Cape sublime,
Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

Semichorus I

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
Let the free possess the Paradise they claim;
Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
With our ruin, our resistance, and our name!

Semichorus II

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
Our survivors be the shadow of their pride,
Our adversity a dream to pass away—
Their dishonour a remembrance to abide!

Voice without. Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
The keys of ocean to the Islamite.—
Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,
And British skill directing Othman might,
Thunder-strike rebel victory. Oh, keep holy
This jubilee of unrevengèd blood!
Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape!

Semichorus I

Darkness has dawned in the East
On the noon of time:
The death-birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.
Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunnier strand,
And follow Love's folding-star
To the Evening land!

Semichorus II

The young moon has fed
Her exhausted horn
With the sunset's fire:
The weak day is dead,
But the night is not born;
And, like loveliness panting with wild desire
While it trembles with fear and delight,
Hesperus flies from awakening night,
And pants in its beauty and speed with light
Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
Thou beacon of love! thou lamp of the free!
Guide us far, far away,
To climes where now veiled by the ardour of day
Thou art hidden
From waves on which weary Noon
Faints in her summer swoon,
Between kingless continents sinless as Eden,
Around mountains and islands inviolably
Pranked on the sapphire sea.

Semichorus I

Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shapes of a dream,
What Paradise islands of glory gleam!

Beneath Heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by—
The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe
Burst, like morning on dream, or like Heaven on death,
Through the walls of our prison;
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen!

Chorus

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A bright Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free:
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose (8)
  Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
  Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
  Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
  Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

NOTES

(1) *The quenchless ashes of Milan*

Milan was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard league against the Austrian tyrant. Frederic Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin. See Sismondi's *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes*, a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

(2) *The Chorus*

The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and to use a common and inadequate phrase, *clothe themselves in matter*, with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world.

The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or less exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained. Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatise upon a subject, concerning which all men are equally ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of His nature, having called us out of non-existence, and after inflicting on us the misery of the commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible. That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state that solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain: meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition

of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being.

(3) *No hoary priests after that Patriarch*

The Greek Patriarch, after having been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents, was put to death by the Turks.

Fortunately the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation, and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe. As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.

(4) *The freedom of a western poet-chief*

A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and unenterprising person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or of greatness whose connection with our character is determined by events.

(5) *The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west*

It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a seaport near Lacedaemon in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irresistibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.

(6) *The sound as of the assault of an imperial city*

For the vision of Mahmud of the taking of Constantinople in 1453, see Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. xii. p. 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second will be censured as over subtle. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjuror, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief, in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensations through the confusion of thought with the objects of thought, and the excess of passion animating the creations of imagination.

It is a sort of natural magic, susceptible of being exercised in a degree by any one who should have made himself master of the secret associations of another's thoughts.

(7) *The Chorus*

The final chorus is indistinct and obscure, as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars,

and rumours of wars, etc., may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate however darkly a period of regeneration and happiness is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign. It will remind the reader "magno *nec* proximus intervallo" of Isaiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the "*lion shall lie down with the lamb*," and "omnis feret omnia tellus." Let these great names be my authority and my excuse.

(8) *Saturn and Love their long repose shall burst*

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. *All* those *who fell*, or the God of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the *One who rose*, or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the Pagan World were amerced of their worship; and *the many unsubdued*, or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America, certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession, during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state of portentous, and, until the revival of learning and the arts, perpetually increasing, activity. The Grecian gods seem indeed to have been personally more innocent, although it cannot be said, that as far as temperance and chastity are concerned, they gave so edifying an example as their successor. The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with a Power, who tempted, betrayed, and punished the innocent beings who were called into existence by His sole will; and for the period of a thousand years, the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent of men has been propitiated with myriads of hecatombs of those who approached the nearest to His innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity and variety of torture. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian superstitions are well known.

FRAGMENTS OF AN UNFINISHED DRAMA

[Written early 1822. Publ. 1824, 1839, 1862.]

[MRS SHELLEY'S NOTE, 1839.—The following fragments are part of a Drama undertaken for the amusement of the individuals who composed our intimate society, but left unfinished. I have preserved a sketch of the story as far as it had been shadowed in the poet's mind.

An Enchantress, living in one of the islands of the Indian Archipelago, saves the life of a Pirate, a man of savage but noble nature. She becomes enamoured of him; and he, inconstant to his mortal love, for a while returns her passion; but at length, recalling the memory of her whom he left, and who laments his loss, he escapes from the Enchanted Island,

and returns to his lady. His mode of life makes him again go to sea, and the Enchantress seizes the opportunity to bring him, by a spirit-brewed tempest, back to her Island.]

SCENE.—*Before the Cavern of the Indian Enchantress*

The ENCHANTRESS *comes forth*

Enchantress

He came like a dream in the dawn of life,
  He fled like a shadow before its noon;
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,
  And I wander and wane like the weary moon.
      O, sweet Echo, wake,
      And for my sake
Make answer the while my heart shall break!

But my heart has a music which Echo's lips,
  Though tender and true, yet can answer not,
And the shadow that moves in the soul's eclipse
  Can return not the kiss by his now forgot;
      Sweet lips! he who hath
      On my desolate path
Cast the darkness of absence, worse than death!

The ENCHANTRESS *makes her spell: she is answered by a Spirit*

Spirit. Within the silent centre of the earth
My mansion is; where I have lived insphered
From the beginning, and around my sleep
Have woven all the wondrous imagery
Of this dim spot, which mortals call the world;
Infinite depths of unknown elements
Massed into one impenetrable mask;
Sheets of immeasurable fire, and veins
Of gold and stone, and adamantine iron.
And as a veil in which I walk through Heaven
I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
And lastly light, whose interfusion dawns
In the dark space of interstellar air.

[A good Spirit, who watches over the Pirate's fate, leads, in a mysterious manner, the lady of his love to the Enchanted Isle. She is accompanied by a Youth, who loves the lady, but whose passion she returns only with a sisterly affection. The ensuing scene takes place between them on their arrival at the isle.—MRS SHELLEY'S NOTE, 1839.]

INDIAN YOUTH *and* LADY

Indian. And, if my grief should still be dearer to me
Than all the pleasures in the world beside,
Why would you lighten it?—
Lady.   I offer only
That which I seek, some human sympathy
In this mysterious island.

Indian. Oh! my friend,
My sister, my beloved!—What do I say?
My brain is dizzy, and I scarce know whether
I speak to thee or her.
Lady. Peace, perturbed heart!
I am to thee only as thou to mine,
The passing wind which heals the brow at noon,
And may strike cold into the breast at night,
Yet cannot linger where it soothes the most,
Or long soothe could it linger.
Indian. But you said
You also loved?
Lady. Loved! Oh, I love. Methinks
This word of love is fit for all the world,
And that for gentle hearts another name
Would speak of gentler thoughts than the world owns.
I have loved.
Indian. And thou lovest not? if so,
Young as thou art thou canst afford to weep.
Lady. Oh! would that I could claim exemption
From all the bitterness of that sweet name.
I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which like a dawn heralds the day of life;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as a tempest;
He came, and went, and left me what I am.
Alas! Why must I think how oft we two
Have sate together near the river springs,
Under the green pavilion which the willow
Spreads on the floor of the unbroken fountain,
Strewn, by the nurslings that linger there,
Over that islet paved with flowers and moss,
While the musk-rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Showered on us, and the dove mourned in the pine,
Sad prophetess of sorrows not her own?
Indian. Your breath is like soft music, your words are
The echoes of a voice which on my heart
Sleeps like a melody of early days.
But as you said——
Lady. He was so awful, yet
So beautiful in mystery and terror,
Calming me as the loveliness of heaven
Soothes the unquiet sea:—and yet not so,
For he seemed stormy, and would often seem
A quenchless sun masked in portentous clouds
For such his thoughts, and even his actions were;
But he was not of them, not they of him,
But as they hid his splendour from the earth.

Some said he was a man of blood and peril,
And steeped in bitter infamy to the lips.
More need was there I should be innocent,
More need that I should be most true and kind,
And much more need that there should be found one
To share remorse and scorn and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life.
He fled, and I have followed him.
Methought a star came down from heaven,
And rested mid the plants of India,
Which I had given a shelter from the frost
Within my chamber. There the meteor lay,
Panting forth light among the leaves and flowers,
As if it lived, and was outworn with speed;
Or that it loved, and passion made the pulse
Of its bright life throb like an anxious heart,
Till it diffused itself, and all the chamber
And walls seemed melted into emerald fire
That burned not; in the midst of which appeared
A spirit like a child, and laughed aloud
A thrilling peal of such sweet merriment
As made the blood tingle in my warm feet:
Then bent over a vase, and murmuring
Low, unintelligible melodies,
Placed something in the mould like melon-seeds,
And slowly faded, and in place of it
A soft hand issued from the veil of fire,
Holding a cup like a magnolia flower,
And poured upon the earth within the vase
The element with which it overflowed,
Brighter than morning light, and purer than
The water of the springs of Himalah.
Indian. You waked not?
Lady. Not until my dream became
Like a child's legend on the tideless sand,
Which the first foam erases half, and half
Leaves legible. At length I rose, and went,
Visiting my flowers from pot to pot, and thought
To set new cuttings in the empty urns,
And when I came to that beside the lattice,
I saw two little dark-green leaves
Lifting the light mould at their birth, and then
I half-remembered my forgotten dream.
And day by day, green as a gourd in June,
The plant grew fresh and thick, yet no one knew
What plant it was; its stem and tendrils seemed
Like emerald snakes, mottled and diamonded
With azure mail and streaks of woven silver;
And all the sheaths that folded the dark buds
Rose like the crest of cobra-di-capel,
Until the golden eye of the bright flower,
Through the dark lashes of those veinèd lids,
. . . disencumbered of their silent sleep,
Gazed like a star into the morning light.

Its leaves were delicate, you almost saw
The pulses
With which the purple velvet flower was fed
To overflow, and like a poet's heart
Changing bright fancy to sweet sentiment,
Changed half the light to fragrance. It soon fell,
And to a green and dewy embryo-fruit
Left all its treasured beauty. Day by day
I nursed the plant, and on the double flute
Played to it on the sunny winter days
Soft melodies, as sweet as April rain
On silent leaves, and sang those words in which
Passion makes Echo taunt the sleeping strings;
And I would send tales of forgotten love
Late into the lone night, and sing wild songs
Of maids deserted in the olden time,
And weep like a soft cloud in April's bosom
Upon the sleeping eyelids of the plant,
So that perhaps it dreamed that Spring was come,
And crept abroad into the moonlight air,
And loosened all its limbs, as, noon by noon,
The sun averted less his oblique beam.
Indian. And the plant died not in the frost?
Lady. It grew;
And went out of the lattice which I left
Half open for it, trailing its quaint spires
Along the garden and across the lawn,
And down the slope of moss and through the tufts
Of wild-flower roots, and stumps of trees o'ergrown
With simple lichens, and old hoary stones,
On to the margin of the glassy pool,
Even to a nook of unblown violets
And lilies-of-the-valley yet unborn,
Under a pine with ivy overgrown.
And there its fruit lay like a sleeping lizard
Under the shadows; but when Spring indeed
Came to unswathe her infants, and the lilies
Peeped from their bright green masks to wonder at
This shape of autumn couched in their recess,
Then it dilated, and it grew until
One half lay floating on the fountain wave,
Whose pulse, elapsed in unlike sympathies,
Kept time
Among the snowy water-lily buds.
Its shape was such as summer melody
Of the south wind in spicy vales might give
To some light cloud bound from the golden dawn
To fairy isles of evening, and it seemed
In hue and form that it had been a mirror
Of all the hues and forms around it and
Upon it pictured by the sunny beams
Which, from the bright vibrations of the pool,
Were thrown upon the rafters and the roof
Of boughs and leaves, and on the pillared stems
Of the dark sylvan temple, and reflections

Of every infant flower and star of moss
And veined leaf in the azure odorous air.
And thus it lay in the Elysian calm
Of its own beauty floating on the line
Which, like a film in purest space, divided
The heaven beneath the water from the heaven
Above the clouds; and every day I went
Watching its growth and wondering;
And as the day grew hot, methought I saw
A glassy vapour dancing on the pool,
And on it little quaint and filmy shapes,
With dizzy motion, wheel and rise and fall,
Like clouds of gnats with perfect lineaments.

. . . . . .

CHARLES THE FIRST

[Written at intervals, late 1819, June 1822. Publ. 1824.]

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING CHARLES I.
QUEEN HENRIETTA.
LAUD, *Archbishop of Canterbury.*
WENTWORTH, *Earl of Strafford.*
LORD COTTINGTON.
LORD WESTON.
LORD COVENTRY.
WILLIAMS, *Bishop of Lincoln.*
Secretary LYTTELTON.
JUXON.
ST JOHN.
ARCHY, *the Court Fool.*
HAMPDEN.
PYM.
CROMWELL.
CROMWELL'S DAUGHTER.
SIR HARRY VANE *the younger.*
LEIGHTON.
BASTWICK.
PRYNNE.

Gentlemen of the Inns of Court, Citizens, Pursuivants, Marshalsmen. Law Students, Judges, Clerk.

SCENE I.—*The Masque of the Inns of Court.*

A Pursuivant. Place, for the Marshal of the Masque!
First Citizen. What thinkest thou of this quaint masque which turns,
Like morning from the shadow of the night,
The night to day, and London to a place
Of peace and joy?
Second Citizen. And Hell to Heaven.
Eight years are gone,
And they seem hours, since in this populous street
I trod on grass made green by summer's rain,
For the red plague kept state within that palace
Where now that vanity reigns. In nine years more
The roots will be refreshed with civil blood;
And thank the mercy of insulted Heaven
That sin and wrongs wound, as an orphan's cry,
The patience of the great Avenger's ear.

A Youth. Yet, father, 'tis a happy sight to see,
Beautiful, innocent, and unforbidden
By God or man ; 'tis like the bright procession
Of skiey visions in a solemn dream
From which men wake as from a Paradise,
And draw new strength to tread the thorns of life.
If God be good, wherefore should this be evil ?
And if this be not evil, dost thou not draw
Unseasonable poison from the flowers
Which bloom so rarely in this barren world ?
Oh, kill these bitter thoughts which make the present
Dark as the future !—

. . . . . .

When Avarice and Tyranny, vigilant Fear,
And open-eyed Conspiracy lie sleeping
As on Hell's threshold ; and all gentle thoughts
Waken to worship Him who giveth joys
With His own gift.

Second Citizen. How young art thou in this old age of time !
How green in this grey world ? Canst thou discern
The signs of seasons, yet perceive no hint
Of change in that stage-scene in which thou art
Not a spectator but an actor ? or
Art thou a puppet moved by [enginery] ?
The day that dawns in fire will die in storms,
Even though the noon be calm. My travel's done,—
Before the whirlwind wakes I shall have found
My inn of lasting rest ; but thou must still
Be journeying on in this inclement air.
Wrap thy old cloak about thy back.

First Citizen. That
Is the Archbishop.

Second Citizen. Rather say the Pope :
London will be soon his Rome : he walks
As if he trod upon the heads of men :
He looks elate, drunken with blood and gold ;—
Beside him moves the Babylonian woman
Invisibly, and with her as with his shadow,
Mitred adulterer ! he is joined in sin,
Which turns Heaven's milk of mercy to revenge.

Third Citizen (*lifting up his eyes*). Good Lord ! rain it down upon him ! . . .
Amid her ladies walks the papist queen,
As if her nice feet scorned our English earth.
The Canaanitish Jezebel ! I would be
A dog if I might tear her with my teeth !
There's old Sir Henry Vane, the Earl of Pembroke,
Lord Essex, and Lord Keeper Coventry,
And others who make base their English breed
By vile participation of their honours
With papists, atheists, tyrants, and apostates.
When lawyers masque 'tis time for honest men
To strip the vizor from their purposes.

First Citizen. I will not think but that our country's wounds
May yet be healed. The king is just and gracious,

Though wicked counsels now pervert his will :
These once cast off—
Second Citizen. As adders cast their skins
And keep their vemon, so kings often change ;
Councils and counsellors hang on one another,
Hiding the loathsome
Like the base patchwork of a leper's rags.
The Youth. Oh, still those dissonant thoughts !—List how the music
Grows on the enchanted air ! And see, the torches
Restlessly flashing, and the crowd divided
Like waves before an admiral's prow !
A Marshalsman. Give place
To the Marshal of the Masque !
A Pursuivant. Room for the King !
The Youth. How glorious ! See those thronging chariots
Rolling, like painted clouds before the wind,
Behind their solemn steeds : how some are shaped
Like curved sea-shells dyed by the azure depths
Of Indian seas ; some like the new-born moon ;
And some like cars in which the Romans climbed
(Canopied by Victory's eagle-wings outspread)
The Capitolian—See how gloriously
The mettled horses in the torchlight stir
Their gallant riders, while they check their pride,
Like shapes of some diviner element
Than English air, and beings nobler than
The envious and admiring multitude.
Second Citizen. Ay, there they are—
Nobles, and sons of nobles, patentees,
Monopolists, and stewards of this poor farm,
On whose lean sheep sit the prophetic crows.
Here is the pomp that strips the houseless orphan,
Here is the pride that breaks the desolate heart.
These are the lilies glorious as Solomon,
Who toil not, neither do they spin,—unless
It be the webs they catch poor rogues withal.
Here is the surfeit which to them who earn
The niggard wages of the earth, scarce leaves
The tithe that will support them till they crawl
Back to her cold hard bosom. Here is health
Followed by grim disease, glory by shame,
Waste by lame famine, wealth by squalid want,
And England's sin by England's punishment.
And, as the effect pursues the cause foregone,
Lo, giving substance to my words, behold
At once the sign and the thing signified—
A troop of cripples, beggars, and lean outcasts,
Horsed upon stumbling jades, carted with dung,
Dragged for a day from cellars and low cabins
And rotten hiding-holes, to point the moral
Of this presentment, and bring up the rear
Of painted pomp with misery !
The Youth. 'Tis but
The anti-masque, and serves as discords do

In sweetest music. Who would love May flowers
If they succeeded not to Winter's flaw;
Or day unchanged by night; or joy itself
Without the touch of sorrow?

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in Whitehall. Enter the* KING, QUEEN, LAUD, LORD STRAFFORD, LORD COTTINGTON, *and other Lords*; ARCHY; *also* ST JOHN, *with some Gentlemen of the Inns of Court.*

King. Thanks, gentlemen. I heartily accept
This token of your service: your gay masque
Was performed gallantly. And it shows well.
Queen. And gentlemen,
Call your poor Queen your debtor. Your quaint pageant
Rose on me like the figures of past years,
Treading their still path back to infancy,
More beautiful and mild as they draw nearer
The quiet cradle. I could have almost wept
To think I was in Paris, where these shows
Are well devised—such as I was ere yet
My young heart shared a portion of the burthen,
The careful weight, of this great monarchy.
There, gentlemen, between the sovereign's pleasure
And that which it regards, no clamour lifts
Its proud interposition.
Archy. The fool is here.
Laud. I crave permission of your Majesty
To order that this insolent fellow be
Chastised: he mocks the sacred character,
Scoffs at the state, and—
King. What, my Archy?
He mocks and mimics all he sees and hears,
Yet with a quaint and graceful licence—Prithee
For this once do not as Prynne would, were he
Primate of England. With your Grace's leave,
He lives in his own world; and, like a parrot
Hung in his gilded prison from the window
Of a queen's bower over the public way,
Blasphemes with a bird's mind:—his words, like arrows
Which know no aim beyond the archer's wit,
Strike sometimes what eludes philosophy.—
(*To* ARCHY.) Go, sirrah, and repent of your offence
Ten minutes in the rain; be it your penance
To bring news how the world goes there. [*Exit* ARCHY.
Poor Archy!
He weaves about himself a world of mirth
Out of the wreck of ours.
Laud. I take with patience, as my Master did,
All scoffs permitted from above.
King. My lord,
Pray overlook these papers. Archy's words
Had wings, but these have talons.
Queen. And the lion
That wears them must be tamed. My dearest lord,

I see the new-born courage in your eye,
Armed to strike dead the Spirit of the Time,
Do thou persist: for, faint but in resolve,
And it were better thou hadst still remained
The slave of thine own slaves, who tear like curs
The fugitive, and flee from the pursuer;
And Opportunity, that empty wolf,
Flies at his throat who falls. Subdue thy actions
Even to the disposition of thy purpose,
And be that tempered as the Ebro's steel;
And banish weak-eyed Mercy to the weak,
Whence she will greet thee with a gift of peace,
And not betray thee with a traitor's kiss,
As when she keeps the company of rebels,
Who think that she is Fear. This do, lest we
Should fall as from a glorious pinnacle
In a bright dream, and wake as from a dream
Out of our worshipped state.

. . . .

Laud. Unleash the sword and fire, that in their thirst
They may lick up that scum of schismatics.
I laugh at those weak rebels who, desiring
What we possess, still prate of Christian peace,
As if those dreadful arbitrating messengers
Which play the part of God 'twixt right and wrong,
Should be let loose against the innocent sleep
Of templed cities and the smiling fields,
For some poor argument of policy
Which touches our own profit or our pride
(Where it indeed were Christian charity
To turn the cheek even to the smiter's hand):
And, when our great Redeemer, when our God,
When He who gave, accepted, and retained
Himself in propitiation of our sins,
Is scorned in His immediate ministry.

. . . .

Queen. My beloved lord,
Have you not noted that the Fool of late
Has lost his careless mirth, and that his words
Sound like the echoes of our saddest fears?
What can it mean? I should be loth to think
Some factious slave had tutored him.
King. Oh, no!
He is but Occasion's pupil. Partly 'tis
That our minds piece the vacant intervals
Of his wild words with their own fashioning,—
As in the imagery of summer clouds,
Or coals of the winter fire, idlers find
The perfect shadows of their teeming thoughts:
And partly, that the terrors of the time
Are sown by wandering Rumour in all spirits;
And in the lightest and the least, may best
Be seen the current of the coming wind.
Queen. Your brain is overwrought with these deep thoughts.

Come, I will sing to you ; let us go try
These airs from Italy. And you shall see
A cradled miniature of yourself asleep,
Stamped on the heart by never-erring love ;
Liker than any Vandyke ever made,
A pattern to the unborn age of thee,
Over whose sweet beauty I have wept for joy
A thousand times, and now should weep for sorrow,
Did I not think that after we were dead,
Our fortunes would spring high in him, and that
The cares we waste upon our heavy crown
Would make it light and glorious as a wreath
Of Heaven's beams for his dear innocent brow.
King. Dear Henrietta !

SCENE IV.—HAMPDEN, PYM, CROMWELL, *his Daughter, and young* SIR HARRY VANE

Hampden. England, farewell ! thou, who hast been my cradle,
Shalt never be my dungeon or my grave !
I held what I inherited in thee
As pawn for that inheritance of freedom
Which thou hast sold for thy despoiler's smile :
How can I call thee England, or my country ?—
Does the wind hold ?
Vane. The vanes sit steady
Upon the Abbey towers. The silver lightnings
Of the evening star, spite of the city's smoke,
Tell that the north wind reigns in the upper air.
Mark too that flock of fleecy-wingèd clouds
Sailing athwart St Margaret's.
Hampden. Hail, fleet herald
Of tempest ! that rude pilot who shall guide
Hearts free as his, to realms as pure as thee,
Beyond the shot of tyranny,
Beyond the webs of that swoln spider . . .
And thou
Fair star, whose beam lies on the wide Atlantic,
Athwart its zones of tempest and of calm,
Bright as the path to a beloved home,
Oh, light us to the isles of the evening land !
Like floating Edens cradled in the glimmer
Of sunset, through the distant mist of years
Touched by departing hope, they gleam ! lone regions,
Where Power's poor dupes and victims yet have never
Propitiated the savage fear of kings
With purest blood of noblest hearts ; whose dew
Is yet unstained with tears of those who wake
To weep each day the wrongs on which it dawns ;
Whose sacred silent air owns yet no echo
Of formal blasphemies ; nor impious rites
Wrest man's free worship, from the God who loves,

To the poor worm who envies us His love !
Receive, thou young   of Paradise,
These exiles from the old and sinful world !

. . . . . .

This glorious clime, this firmament, whose lights
Dart mitigated influence through their veil
Of pale blue atmosphere ; whose tears keep green
The pavement of this moist all-feeding earth ;
This vaporous horizon, whose dim round
Is bastioned by the circumfluous sea,
Repelling invasion from the sacred towers,
Presses upon me like a dungeon's grate,
A low dark roof, a damp and narrow wall.
The boundless universe
Becomes a cell too narrow for the soul
That owns no master ; while the loathliest ward
Of this wide prison, England, is a nest
Of cradling peace built on the mountain tops,—
To which the eagle spirits of the free,
Which range through heaven and earth, and scorn the storm
Of time, and gaze upon the light of truth,
Return to brood on thoughts that cannot die
And cannot be repelled.

A SONG FROM CHARLES THE FIRST

[Publ. 1824.]

HEIGH-HO ! the lark and the owl !
  One flies the morning, and one lulls the night,
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
  Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

" A widow bird sate mourning for her love
    Upon a wintry bough ;
The frozen wind crept on above,
    The freezing stream below.

" There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
    No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
    Except the mill-wheel's sound."

Translations

1815-1822

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS

[Publ. with *Alastor*, 1816.]

Τὰν ἅλα τὰν γλαυκὰν ὅταν ὤνεμος ἀτρέμα βάλλῃ.

When winds that move not its calm surface sweep
The azure sea, I love the land no more ;
The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
Tempt my unquiet mind.—But when the roar
Of Ocean's grey abyss resounds, and foam
Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
I turn from the drear aspect to the home
Of Earth and its deep woods, where interspersed,
When winds blow loud, pines make sweet melody.
Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the sea,
Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
Has chosen . . . . But I my languid limbs will fling
Beneath the plane, where the brook's murmuring
Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

SONNET

From the Italian of Dante

[Publ. 1816.]

Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti

Guido, I would that Lapo, thou, and I,
Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend
A magic ship, whose charmèd sails should fly
With winds at will where'er our thoughts might wend,
So that no change, nor any evil chance
Should mar our joyous voyage ; but it might be,
That even satiety should still enhance
Between our hearts their strict community ;

And that the bounteous wizard then would place
Vanna and Bìce and my gentle love,
Companions of our wandering, and would grace
With passionate talk, wherever we might rove,
Our time, and each were as content and free
As I believe that thou and I should be.

TRANSLATION FROM MOSCHUS

[Early 1818 ? Publ. 1824.]

Pan loved his neighour Echo—but that child
Of Earth and Air pined for the Satyr leaping ;
The Satyr loved with wasting madness wild
The bright nymph Lyda,—and so three went weeping.

As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the Satyr,
The Satyr, Lyda ; and so love consumed them,
And thus to each—which was a woful matter—
To bear what they inflicted Justice doomed them.

For inasmuch as each might hate the lover,
Each, loving, so was hated.—Ye that love not,
Be warned—in thought turn this example over,
That when ye love, the like return ye prove not.

HOMER'S HYMN TO CASTOR AND POLLUX

[Publ. 1839, 2nd ed. ; dated 1818.]

Ye wild-eyed Muses, sing the Twins of Jove,
Whom the fair-ankled Leda, mixed in love,
With mighty Saturn's Heaven-obscuring Child,
On Taygetus, that lofty mountain wild,
Brought forth in joy : mild Pollux, void of blame,
And steed-subduing Castor, heirs of fame.
These are the Powers who earth-born mortals save
And ships, whose flight is swift along the wave.
When wintry tempests o'er the savage sea
Are raging, and the sailors tremblingly
Call on the Twins of Jove with prayer and vow,
Gathered in fear upon the lofty prow,
And sacrifice with snow-white lambs,—the wind
And the huge billow bursting close behind,
Even then beneath the weltering waters bear
The staggering ship—they suddenly appear,
On yellow wings rushing athwart the sky,
And lull the blasts in mute tranquillity,

And strew the waves on the white Ocean's bed,
Fair omen of the voyage; from toil and dread
The sailors rest, rejoicing in the sight,
And plough the quiet sea in safe delight.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE SUN

[Publ. 1839, 2nd ed.; dated 1818.]

Offspring of Jove, Calliope, once more
To the bright Sun, thy hymn of music pour;
Whom to the child of star-clad Heaven and Earth
Euryphaëssa, large-eyed nymph, brought forth;
Euryphaëssa, the famed sister fair
Of great Hyperion, who to him did bear
A race of loveliest children; the young Morn,
Whose arms are like twin roses newly born,
The fair-haired Moon, and the immortal Sun,
Who borne by heavenly steeds his race doth run
Unconquerably, illuming the abodes
Of mortal Men and the eternal Gods.

Fiercely look forth his awe-inspiring eyes,
Beneath his golden helmet, whence arise
And are shot forth afar, clear beams of light;
His countenance, with radiant glory bright,
Beneath his graceful locks far shines around,
And the light vest with which his limbs are bound,
Of woof etherial delicately twined,
Glows in the stream of the uplifting wind.
His rapid steeds soon bear him to the West;
Where their steep flight his hands divine arrest,
And the fleet car with yoke of gold, which he
Sends from bright Heaven beneath the shadowy sea.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE MOON

[Publ. 1839, 2nd ed.; dated 1818.]

Daughters of Jove, whose voice is melody,
Muses, who know and rule all minstrelsy,
Sing the wide-wingèd Moon! Around the earth,
From her immortal head in Heaven shot forth,
Far light is scattered—boundless glory springs;
Where'er she spreads her many-beaming wings
The lampless air glows round her golden crown.

But when the Moon divine from Heaven is gone
Under the sea, her beams within abide,
Till, bathing her bright limbs in Ocean's tide,
Clothing her form in garments glittering far,
And having yoked to her immortal car
The beam-invested steeds whose necks on high

Curve back, she drives to a remoter sky
A western Crescent, borne impetuously.
Then is made full the circle of her light,
And as she grows, her beams more bright and bright
Are poured from Heaven, where she is hovering then,
A wonder and a sign to mortal men.

The Son of Saturn with this glorious Power
Mingled in love and sleep—to whom she bore
Pandeia, a bright maid of beauty rare
Among the Gods, whose lives eternal are.

Hail Queen, great Moon, white-armed Divinity,
Fair-haired and favourable! thus with thee
My song beginning, by its music sweet
Shall make immortal many a glorious feat
Of demigods, with lovely lips, so well
Which minstrels, servants of the Muses, tell.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE EARTH: MOTHER OF ALL

[Publ. 1839, 2nd ed.; dated 1818.]

O UNIVERSAL Mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundations deep,
Eldest of things, Great Earth, I sing of thee!
All shapes that have their dwelling in the sea,
All things that fly, or on the ground divine
Live, move, and there are nourished—these are thine;
These from thy wealth thou dost sustain; from thee
Fair babes are born, and fruits on every tree
Hang ripe and large, revered Divinity!

The life of mortal men beneath thy sway
Is held; thy power both gives and takes away!
Happy are they whom thy mild favours nourish;
All things unstinted round them grow and flourish.
For them, endures the life-sustaining field
Its load of harvest, and their cattle yield
Large increase, and their house with wealth is filled.
Such honoured dwell in cities fair and free,
The homes of lovely women, prosperously;
Their sons exult in youth's new budding gladness,
And their fresh daughters free from care or sadness,
With bloom-inwoven dance and happy song,
On the soft flowers the meadow-grass among,
Leap round them sporting—such delights by thee
Are given, rich Power, revered Divinity.

Mother of gods, thou Wife of starry Heaven,
Farewell! be thou propitious, and be given
A happy life for this brief melody,
Nor thou nor other songs shall unremembered be.

HOMER'S HYMN TO MINERVA

[Publ. 1839, 2nd ed.; dated 1818.]

I sing the glorious Power with azure eyes,
Athenian Pallas! tameless, chaste, and wise,
Tritogenia, town-preserving Maid,
Revered and mighty; from his awful head
Whom Jove brought forth, in warlike armour dressed,
Golden, all radiant! wonder strange possessed
The everlasting Gods that Shape to see,
Shaking a javelin keen, impetuously
Rush from the crest of Aegis-bearing Jove;
Fearfully Heaven was shaken, and did move
Beneath the might of the Cerulean-eyed;
Earth dreadfully resounded, far and wide;
And, lifted from its depths, the sea swelled high
In purple billows, the tide suddenly
Stood still, and great Hyperion's son long time
Checked his swift steeds, till, where she stood sublime,
Pallas from her immortal shoulders threw
The arms divine; wise Jove rejoiced to view.
Child of the Aegis-bearer, hail to thee,
Nor thine nor others' praise shall unremembered be.

HOMER'S HYMN TO VENUS

[Publ. 1862; dated 1818.]

Muse, sing the deeds of golden Aphrodite,
Who wakens with her smile the lulled delight
Of sweet desire, taming the eternal kings
Of Heaven, and men, and all the living things
That fleet along the air, or whom the sea,
Or earth, with her maternal ministry,
Nourish innumerable, thy delight
All seek   O crownèd Aphrodite!
Three spirits canst thou not deceive or quell:—
Minerva, child of Jove, who loves too well
Fierce war and mingling combat, and the fame
Of glorious deeds, to heed thy gentle flame,—
Diana   golden-shafted queen,
Is tamed not by thy smiles; the shadows green
Of the wild woods, the bow, the . . .
And piercing cries amid the swift pursuit
Of beasts among waste mountains,—such delight
Is hers, and men who know and do the right,—
Nor Saturn's first-born daughter, Vesta chaste,
Whom Neptune and Apollo wooed the last,
Such was the will of aegis-bearing Jove;
But sternly she refused the ills of Love,

And by her mighty Father's head she swore
An oath not unperformed, that evermore
A virgin she would live mid deities
Divine: her father, for such gentle ties
Renounced, gave glorious gifts—thus in his hall
She sits and feeds luxuriously. O'er all
In every fane, her honours first arise
From men—the eldest of Divinities.

These spirits she persuades not, nor deceives,
But none beside escape, so well she weaves
Her unseen toils; nor mortal men, nor gods
Who live secure in their unseen abodes.
She won the soul of him whose fierce delight
Is thunder—first in glory and in might.
And, as she willed, his mighty mind deceiving,
With mortal limbs his deathless limbs inweaving,
Concealed him from his spouse and sister fair,
Whom to wise Saturn ancient Rhea bare.
but in return,
In Venus Jove did soft desire awaken,
That by her own enchantments overtaken,
She might, no more from human union free,
Burn for a nursling of mortality.
For once, amid the assembled Deities,
The laughter-loving Venus from her eyes
Shot forth the light of a soft starlight smile,
And boasting said, that she, secure the while,
Could bring at will to the assembled Gods
The mortal tenants of earth's dark abodes,
And mortal offspring from a deathless stem
She could produce in scorn and spite of them.
Therefore he poured desire into her breast
Of young Anchises,
Feeding his herds among the mossy fountains
Of the wide Ida's many-folded mountains,—
Whom Venus saw, and loved, and the love clung
Like wasting fire her senses wild among.

THE CYCLOPS

A Satyric Drama

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF EURIPIDES

[Late 1819? Publ. 1824.]

Silenus.
Chorus of Satyrs.
Ulysses.
The Cyclops.

Silenus. O Bacchus, what a world of toil, both now
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st
The mountain-nymphs who nursed thee, driven afar

By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;
Then in the battle of the sons of Earth,
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,
No unpropitious fellow-combatant,
And, driving through his shield my wingèd spear,
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove, it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before.
For when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea
With all my children quaint in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beakèd prow
And fixed the naked mast; and all my boys
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea,—
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this waste Aetnean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopses, inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polypheme, has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,
We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.
My sons indeed, on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,
But I remain to fill the water-casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it!
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive
My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicinnian measures
Even now the same, as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Althaea's halls?

Chorus of Satyrs

STROPHE

Where has he of race divine
  Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine
  For the father of the flocks;—
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave.—
Neither here, nor on the dew
  Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come!—a stone at you

Will I throw to mend your breeding ·—
Get along, you hornèd thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPODE

An Iacchic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight
With the Maenads, whose white feet
To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O belovèd, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?
To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,
Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

Silenus. Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.
Chorus. Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?
Silenus. I see a Grecian vessel on the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave.—About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wanted food,
And water-flasks.—Oh, miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polypheme,
And the Cyclopian jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear
Whence coming, they arrive the Aetnean hill.
Ulysses. Friends, can you show me some clear water-spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seem to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder.—Hail!
Silenus. Hail thou,
O Stranger! tell thy country and thy race.
Ulysses. The Ithacan Ulysses and the king
Of Cephalonia.
Silenus. Oh! I know the man,
Wordy and shrewd, the son of Sisyphus.
Ulysses. I am the same, but do not rail upon me.—
Silenus. Whence sailing do you come to Sicily?
Ulysses. From Ilion, and from the Trojan toils.
Silenus. How, touched you not at your paternal shore?
Ulysses. The strength of tempests bore me here by force.
Silenus. The self-same accident occurred to me.
Ulysses. Were you then driven here by stress of weather?
Silenus. Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.

Ulysses. What land is this, and who inhabit it?—
Silenus. Aetna, the loftiest peak in Sicily.
Ulysses. And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?
Silenus. There are not.—These lone rocks are bare of men.
Ulysses. And who possess the land? the race of beasts?
Silenus. Cyclops, who live in caverns, not in houses.
Ulysses. Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?
Silenus. Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.
Ulysses. How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?
Silenus. On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.
Ulysses. Have they the Bromian drink from the vine's stream?
Silenus. Ah! no; they live in an ungracious land.
Ulysses. And are they just to strangers?—hospitable?
Silenus. They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings
Is his own flesh.
Ulysses. What! do they eat man's flesh?
Silenus. No one comes here who is not eaten up.
Ulysses. The Cyclops now—where is he? Not at home?
Silenus. Absent on Aetna, hunting with his dogs.
Ulysses. Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?
Silenus. I know not: we will help you all we can.
Ulysses. Provide us food, of which we are in want.
Silenus. Here is not anything, as I said, but meat.
Ulysses. But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.
Silenus. Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.
Ulysses. Bring out:—I would see all before I bargain.
Silenus. But how much gold will you engage to give?
Ulysses. I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.
Silenus. Oh, joy!
'Tis long since these dry lips were wet with wine.
Ulysses. Maron, the son of the God, gave it me.
Silenus. Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.
Ulysses. The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.
Silenus. Have you it now?—or is it in the ship?
Ulysses. Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.
Silenus. Why, this would hardly be a mouthful for me.
Ulysses. Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.
Silenus. You speak of a fair fountain, sweet to me.
Ulysses. Would you first taste of the unmingled wine?
Silenus. 'Tis just—tasting invites the purchaser.
Ulysses. Here is the cup, together with the skin.
Silenus. Pour: that the draught may fillip my remembrance.
Ulysses. See!
Silenus. Papaiax! what a sweet smell it has!
Ulysses. You see it then?—
Silenus. By Jove, no! but I smell it.
Ulysses. Taste, that you may not praise it in words only.
Silenus. Babai! Great Bacchus calls me forth to dance!
Joy! joy!
Ulysses. Did it flow sweetly down your throat?
Silenus. So that it tingled to my very nails.
Ulysses. And in addition I will give you gold.
Silenus. Let gold alone! only unlock the cask.
Ulysses. Bring out some cheeses now, or a young goat.
Silenus. That will I do, despising any master.

Yes, let me drink one cup, and I will give
All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains.

. . . .

Chorus. Ye have taken Troy and laid your hands on Helen?
Ulysses. And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.

. . . .

Silenus. The wanton wretch! she was bewitched to see
The many-coloured anklets and the chain
Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris,
And so she left that good man Menelaus.
There should be no more women in the world
But such as are reserved for me alone.—
See, here are sheep, and here are goats, Ulysses,
Here are unsparing cheeses of pressed milk;
Take them; depart with what good speed ye may;
First leaving my reward, the Bacchic dew
Of joy-inspiring grapes.
Ulysses. Ah me! Alas!
What shall we do? the Cyclops is at hand!
Old man, we perish! whither can we fly?
Silenus. Hide yourselves quick within that hollow rock.
Ulysses. 'Twere perilous to fly into the net.
Silenus. The cavern has recesses numberless;
Hide yourselves quick.
Ulysses. That will I never do!
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced
If I should fly one man. How many times
Have I withstood, with shield immovable,
Ten thousand Phrygians!—if I needs must die,
Yet will I die with glory;—if I live,
The praise which I have gained will yet remain.
Silenus. What, ho! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance!

The CYCLOPS, SILENUS, ULYSSES; CHORUS

Cyclops. What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here,
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets.
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking
Their dams or playing by their sides? And is
The new cheese pressed into the bulrush baskets?
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears—
Look up, not downwards when I speak to you.
Silenus. See! I now gape at Jupiter himself;
I stare upon Orion and the stars.
Cyclops. Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid?
Silenus. All ready, if your throat is ready too.
Cyclops. Are the bowls full of milk besides?
Silenus. O'er-brimming;
So you may drink a tunful if you will.
Cyclops. Is it ewe's milk or cow's milk, or both mixed?—
Silenus. Both, either; only pray don't swallow me.
Cyclops. By no means.——

. . . .

What is this crowd I see beside the stalls?
Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home

I see my young lambs coupled two by two
With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie
Their implements; and this old fellow here
Has his bald head broken with stripes.
Silenus. Ah me!
I have been beaten till I burn with fever.
Cyclops. By whom? Who laid his fist upon your head?
Silenus. Those men, because I would not suffer them
To steal your goods.
Cyclops. Did not the rascals know
I am a God, sprung from the race of Heaven?
Silenus. I told them so, but they bore off your things,
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,
And carried out the lambs—and said, moreover,
They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar,
And pull your vitals out through your one eye,
Furrow your back with stripes, then, binding you,
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,
And then deliver you, a slave, to move
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule.
Cyclops. In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly
The cooking-knives, and heap upon the hearth,
And kindle it, a great faggot of wood.—
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals,
Or boiled and seethed within the bubbling caldron.
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game;
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough,
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.
Silenus. Nay, master, something new is very pleasant
After one thing forever, and of late
Very few strangers have approached our cave.
Ulysses. Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side.
We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here
This old Silenus gave us in exchange
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank,
And all by mutual compact, without force.
There is no word of truth in what he says,
For slyly he was selling all your store.
Silenus. I? May you perish, wretch—
Ulysses. If I speak false!
Silenus. Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee,
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old,
Calypso and the glaucous Ocean Nymphs,
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes—
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master,
My darling little Cyclops, that I never
Gave any of your stores to these false strangers;—
If I speak false may those whom most I love,
My children, perish wretchedly!
Chorus. There stop!
I saw him giving these things to the strangers.
If I speak false, then may my father perish,
But do not thou wrong hospitality.

Cyclops. You lie! I swear that he is juster far
Than Rhadamanthus—I trust more in him.
But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers?
Who are you? And what city nourished ye?
Ulysses. Our race is Ithacan—having destroyed
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea
Have driven us on thy land, O Polypheme.
Cyclops. What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream?
Ulysses. The same, having endured a woful toil.
Cyclops. Oh, basest expedition! sailed ye not
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake?
Ulysses. 'Twas the Gods' work—no mortal was in fault.
But, O great Offspring of the Ocean-King,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious food within thy jaws.
For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great Father, which are all
His homes. The sacred bay of Taenarus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And aery Sunium's silver-veinèd crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian asylums, and whate'er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Aetna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws,
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor fixing upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Priam's wide land has widowed Greece enough;
And weapon-wingèd murder heaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and gray fathers wail
Their childless age;—if you should roast the rest—
And 'tis a bitter feast that you prepare—
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded;
Forgo the lust of your jaw-bone; prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will:
Many have bought too dear their evil joys.
Silenus. Let me advise you, do not spare a morsel
Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops.
Cyclops. Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's God,
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt,
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not.—When he pours

Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high Heaven.
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,
I wrap my body in the skin of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other God but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifise? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you:—
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts;—fierce fire
And yon ancestral caldron, which o'er-bubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in!—

. . . . . .

Ulysses. Ai! ai! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall
Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, Mistress, Goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these;—I totter on the chasms of peril;—
And thou who inhabitest the thrones
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no God!

Chorus (*alone*).

For your gaping gulf and your gullet wide,
The ravin is ready on every side,
The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done;
  There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coal,
You may chop it, and tear it, and gnash it for fun,
  An hairy goat's-skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.
The Cyclops Aetnean is cruel and bold,
    He murders the strangers
      That sit on his hearth,
    And dreads no avengers
      To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatches them broiling from the coal,
And from the caldron pulls them whole,
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone
With his cursèd teeth, till all be gone.

Farewell, foul pavilion ;
  Farewell, rites of dread !
The Cyclops vermilion,
    With slaughter uncloying,
  Now feasts on the dead,
    In the flesh of strangers joying !

Ulysses. O Jupiter ! I saw within the cave
Horrible things ; deeds to be feigned in words,
But not to be believed as being done.

Chorus. What ! sawest thou the impious Polypheme
Feasting upon your loved companions now ?

Ulysses. Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,
He grasped them in his hands.—

Chorus. Unhappy man !

. . . . . .

Ulysses. Soon as we came into this craggy place,
Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak,
Three waggon-loads at least, and then he strewed
Upon the ground, beside the red fire light,
His couch of pine-leaves ; and he milked the cows,
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much
As would contain ten amphorae, and bound it
With ivy wreaths ; then placed upon the fire
A brazen pot to boil, and made red hot
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle,
But with a fruit tree bough, and with the jaws
Of axes for Aetnean slaughterings.
And when this God-abandoned Cook of Hell
Had made all ready, he seized two of us
And killed them in a kind of measured manner ;
For he flung one against the brazen rivets
Of the huge caldron, and seized the other
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone :
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking-knife
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs
He chopped into the caldron to be boiled.
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes,
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him ;
The rest, in the recesses of the cave,
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.
When he was filled with my companions' flesh,
He threw himself upon the ground and sent
A loathsome exhalation from his maw.
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled
The cup of Maron, and I offered him
To taste, and said :—" Child of the Ocean God,
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,
The exultation and the joy of Bacchus."
He, satiated with his unnatural food,
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,
And taking my hand, praised me :—" Thou hast given
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest."

And I, perceiving that it pleased him, filled
Another cup, well knowing that the wine
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.
And the charm fascinated him, and I
Plied him cup after cup, until the drink
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud
In concert with my wailing fellow-seamen
A hideous discord—and the cavern rung.
I have stolen out, so that if you will
You may achieve my safety and your own.
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly
This uncompanionable man, and dwell
As was your wont among the Grecian Nymphs
Within the fanes of your belovèd God?
Your father there within agrees to it,
But he is weak and overcome with wine,
And caught as if with bird-lime by the cup,
He claps his wings and crows in doting joy.
You who are young escape with me, and find
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he
To this rude Cyclops.
Chorus. Oh my dearest friend,
That I could see that day, and leave for ever
The impious Cyclops.

. . . . . .

Ulysses. Listen then what a punishment I have
For this fell monster, how secure a flight
From your hard servitude.
Chorus. O sweeter far
Than is the music of an Asian lyre
Would be the news of Polypheme destroyed.
Ulysses. Delighted with the Bacchic drink he goes
To call his brother Cyclops—who inhabit
A village upon Aetna not far off.
Chorus. I understand, catching him when alone
You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.
Ulysses. Oh no;
Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.
Chorus. How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise.
Ulysses. I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopses
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.
When, vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,
There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point having made sharp with this good sword
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye
And melt it out with fire—as when a man
Turns by its handle a great auger round,
Fitting the framework of a ship with beams,
So will I, in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand and dry the pupil up.

Chorus. Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.
Ulysses. And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.
Chorus. May I, as in libations to a God,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?
I would have some communion in his death.
Ulysses. Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.
Chorus. Oh! I would lift an hundred waggon-loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.
Ulysses. Silence now!
Ye know the close device—and when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave: I might escape,
Having got clear from that obscure recess,
But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

Chorus

Come! who is first, that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?

Semichorus I (*Song within*)

Listen! listen! he is coming,
A most hideous discord humming.
Drunken, museless, awkward, yelling,
Far along his rocky dwelling;
Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable.
By all means he must be blinded,
If my counsel be but minded.

Semichorus II

Happy thou made odorous
With the dew which sweet grapes weep,
To the village hastening thus,
Seek the vines that soothe to sleep;
Having first embraced thy friend,
Thou in luxury without end,
With the strings of yellow hair,
Of thy voluptuous leman fair,
Shalt sit playing on a bed!—
Speak! what door is opened?

Cyclops

Ha! ha! ha! I'm full of wine,
Heavy with the joy divine,
With the young feast oversated;
Like a merchant's vessel freighted

To the water's edge, my crop
Is laden to the gullet's top.
The fresh meadow grass of spring
Tempts me forth thus wandering
  To my brothers on the mountains
  Who shall share the wine's sweet fountains.
Bring the cask, O stranger, bring!

Chorus

One with eyes the fairest
  Cometh from his dwelling
Some one loves thee, rarest,
  Bright beyond my telling.
In thy grace thou shinest
Like some nymph divinest
In her caverns dewy:—
All delights pursue thee,
Soon pied flowers, sweet-breathing,
Shall thy head be wreathing.

Ulysses. Listen, O Cyclops, for I am well skilled
In Bacchus, whom I gave thee of to drink.
Cyclops. What sort of God is Bacchus then accounted?
Ulysses. The greatest among men for joy of life.
Cyclops. I gulped him down with very great delight.
Ulysses. This is a God who never injures men.
Cyclops. How does the God like living in a skin?
Ulysses. He is content wherever he is put.
Cyclops. Gods should not have their body in a skin.
Ulysses. If he gives joy, what is his skin to you?
Cyclops. I hate the skin, but love the wine within.
Ulysses. Stay here now: drink, and make your spirit glad.
Cyclops. Should I not share this liquor with my brothers?
Ulysses. Keep it yourself, and be more honoured so.
Cyclops. I were more useful, giving to my friends.
Ulysses. But village mirth breeds contests, broils, and blows.
Cyclops. When I am drunk none shall lay hands on me.—
Ulysses. A drunken man is better within doors.
Cyclops. He is a fool, who drinking, loves not mirth.
Ulysses. But he is wise, who drunk, remains at home.
Cyclops. What shall I do, Silenus? Shall I stay?
Silenus. Stay—for what need have you of pot companions?
Cyclops. Indeed this place is closely carpeted
With flowers and grass.
Silenus. And in the sun-warm noon
'Tis sweet to drink. Lie down beside me now,
Placing your mighty sides upon the ground.
Cyclops. What do you put the cup behind me for?
Silenus. That no one here may touch it.
Cyclops. Thievish one!
You want to drink;—here place it in the midst.
And thou, O stranger, tell how art thou called?
Ulysses. My name is Nobody. What favour now
Shall I receive to praise you at your hands?

Cyclops. I'll feast on you the last of your companions.
Ulysses. You grant your guest a fair reward, O Cyclops.
Cyclops. Ha! what is this? Stealing the wine, you rogue!
Silenus. It was this stranger kissing me because
I looked so beautiful.
Cyclops. You shall repent
For kissing the coy wine that loves you not.
Silenus. By Jupiter! you said that I am fair.
Cyclops. Pour out, and only give me the cup full.
Silenus. How is it mixed? let me observe.
Cyclops. Curse you!
Give it me so.
Silenus. Not till I see you wear
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.
Cyclops. Thou wily traitor!
Silenus. But the wine is sweet.
Ay, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.
Cyclops. See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.
Silenus. Now put your elbow right and drink again.
As you see me drink— . . .
Cyclops. How now?
Silenus. Ye Gods, what a delicious gulp!
Cyclops. Guest, take it;—you pour out the wine for me.
Ulysses. The wine is well accustomed to my hand.
Cyclops. Pour out the wine!
Ulysses. I pour; only be silent.
Cyclops. Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.
Ulysses. Take it and drink it off; leave not a dreg.
Oh, that the drinker died with his own draught!
Cyclops. Papai! the vine must be a sapient plant.
Ulysses. If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.
Cyclops. Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the Gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not—for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.
Silenus. Polypheme,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.
Cyclops. By Jove, you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.

. . . .

ULYSSES *and the* CHORUS

Ulysses. Come, boys of Bacchus, children of high race,
This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye;—but bear yourselves like men.
Chorus. We will have courage like the adamant rock,
All things are ready for you here; go in,

Before our father shall perceive the noise.
Ulysses. Vulcan, Aetnean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O Sleep, nursling of gloomy Night,
Descend unmixed on this God-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
To perish by this man, who cares not either
For God or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

Chorus

Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest,
Fire will burn his lamp-like eyes
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.
Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up
Of the Cyclops—that his cup
May be evil!
Oh! I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy wreaths attired;
Leaving this abandoned home—
Will the moment ever come?

Ulysses. Be silent ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,
Or spit, e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.
Chorus. Nay, we are silent, and we chaw the air.
Ulysses. Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within—it is delightfully red hot.
Chorus. You then command who first should seize the stake
To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprise.
Semichorus I. We are too far;
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.
Semichorus. II And we just now
How become lame! cannot move hand or foot.
Chorus. The same thing has occurred to us,—our ankles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.
Ulysses. What, sprained with standing still?
Chorus. And there is dust
Or ashes in our eyes; I know not whence,
Ulysses. Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?
Chorus. With pitying my own back and my back-bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself—but stay,

I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.
Ulysses. Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better.—I will use the aid
Of my own comrades. Yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words.
Chorus. This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.
Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Aetnian hind!
Scoop and draw,
But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.
Cyclops. Ah me! my eyesight is parched up to cinders.
Chorus. What a sweet paean! sing me that again!
Cyclops. Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But, wretched nothings, think ye not to flee
Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way and catch you as you pass.
Chorus. What are you roaring out, Cyclops?
Cyclops. I perish!
Chorus. For you are wicked.
Cyclops. And besides miserable.
Chorus. What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?
Cyclops. 'Twas Nobody destroyed me.
Chorus. Why then no one
Can be to blame.
Cyclops. I say 'twas Nobody
Who blinded me.
Chorus. Why then you are not blind.
Cyclops. I wish you were as blind as I am.
Chorus. Nay,
It cannot be that no one made you blind.
Cyclops. You jeer me: where, I ask, is Nobody?
Chorus. Nowhere, O Cyclops.
Cyclops. It was that stranger ruined me:—the wretch
First gave me wine and then burned out my eye,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.
Have they escaped, or are they yet within?
Chorus. They stand under the darkness of the rock
And cling to it.
Cyclops. At my right hand or left?
Chorus. Close on your right.
Cyclops. Where?
Chorus. Near the rock itself.
You have them.
Cyclops. Oh, misfortune on misfortune!
I've cracked my skull.
Chorus. Now they escape you—there.

Cyclops. Not there, although you say so.
Chorus. Not on that side.
Cyclops. Where then ?
Chorus. They creep about you on your left.
Cyclops. Ah ! I am mocked ! They jeer me in my ills.
Chorus. Not there ! he is a little there beyond you.
Cyclops. Detested wretch ! where are you ?
Ulysses. Far from you
I keep with care this body of Ulysses.
Cyclops. What do you say ? You proffer a new name.
Ulysses. My father named me so ; and I have taken
A full revenge for your unnatural feast ;
I should have done ill to have burned down Troy
And not revenged the murder of my comrades.
Cyclops. Ai ! ai ! the ancient oracle is accomplished ;
It said that I should have my eye-sight blinded
By your coming from Troy, yet it foretold
That you should pay the penalty for this
By wandering long over the homeless sea.
Ulysses. I bid thee weep—consider what I say ;
I go towards the shore to drive my ship
To mine own land, o'er the Sicilian wave.
Cyclops. Not so, if, whelming you with this huge stone,
I can crush you and all your men together ;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.
Chorus. And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

HYMN TO MERCURY

Translated from the Greek of Homer

[Summer 1820. Publ. 1824.]

I

Sing, Muse, the son of Maia and of Jove,
The Herald-child, king of Arcadia
And all its pastoral hills, whom in sweet love
Having been interwoven, modest May
Bore Heaven's dread Supreme. An antique grove
Shadowed the cavern where the lovers lay
In the deep night, unseen by Gods or Men,
And white-armed Juno slumbered sweetly then.

II

Now, when the joy of Jove had its fulfilling,
And Heaven's tenth moon chronicled her relief,
She gave to light a babe all babes excelling,
A schemer subtle beyond all belief ;
A shepherd of thin dreams, a cow-stealing,
A night-watching, and door-waylaying thief,
Who 'mongst the Gods was soon about to thieve,
And other glorious actions to achieve.

III

The babe was born at the first peep of day;
  He began playing on the lyre at noon,
And the same evening did he steal away
  Apollo's herds;—the fourth day of the moon
On which him bore the venerable May,
  From her immortal limbs he leaped full soon,
Nor long could in the sacred cradle keep,
But out to seek Apollo's herds would creep.

IV

Out of the lofty cavern wandering
  He found a tortoise, and cried out—"A treasure!"
For (Mercury first made the tortoise sing)
  The beast before the portal at his leisure
The flowery herbage was depasturing,
  Moving his feet in a deliberate measure
Over the turf. Jove's profitable son
Eying him laughed, and laughing thus began:—

V

"A useful godsend are you to me now,
  King of the dance, companion of the feast,
Lovely in all your nature! Welcome, you
  Excellent plaything! Where, sweet mountain-beast,
Got you that speckled shell? Thus much I know,
  You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honour you.

VI

"Better to be at home than out of door,
  So come with me; and though it has been said
That you alive defend from magic power,
  I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead."
Thus having spoken, the quaint infant bore,
  Lifting it from the grass on which it fed
And grasping it in his delighted hold,
His treasured prize into the cavern old.

VII

Then scooping with a chisel of gray steel,
  He bored the life and soul out of the beast.—
Not swifter a swift thought of woe or weal
  Darts through the tumult of a human breast
Which thronging cares annoy—not swifter wheel
  The flashes of its torture and unrest
Out of the dizzy eyes—than Maia's son
All that he did devise hath featly done.

VIII

. . . . . .

  And through the tortoise's hard stony skin
At proper distances small holes he made,

And fastened the cut stems of reeds within,
And with a piece of leather overlaid
The open space and fixed the cubits in,
Fitting the bridge to both, and stretched o'er all
Symphonious cords of sheep-gut rhythmical.

IX

When he had wrought the lovely instrument,
He tried the chords, and made division meet,
Preluding with the plectrum, and there went
Up from beneath his hand a tumult sweet
Of mighty sounds, and from his lips he sent
A strain of unpremeditated wit
Joyous and wild and wanton—such you may
Hear among revellers on a holiday.

X

He sung how Jove and May of the bright sandal
Dallied in love not quite legitimate;
And his own birth, still scoffing at the scandal,
And naming his own name, did celebrate;
His mother's cave and servant maids he planned all
In plastic verse, her household stuff and state,
Perennial pot, trippet, and brazen pan,—
But singing, he conceived another plan.

XI

. . . .
Seized with a sudden fancy for fresh meat,
He in his sacred crib deposited
The hollow lyre, and from the cavern sweet
Rushed with great leaps up to the mountain's head,
Revolving in his mind some subtle feat
Of thievish craft, such as a swindler might
Devise in the lone season of dun night.

XII

Lo! the great Sun under the ocean's bed has
Driven steeds and chariot—the child meanwhile strode
O'er the Pierian mountains clothed in shadows,
Where the immortal oxen of the God
Are pastured in the flowering unmown meadows,
And safely stalled in a remote abode.—
The archer Argicide, elate and proud,
Drove fifty from the herd, lowing aloud.

XIII

He drove them wandering o'er the sandy way,
But, being ever mindful of his craft,
Backward and forward drove he them astray,
So that the tracks which seemed before, were aft;
His sandals then he threw to the ocean spray,
And for each foot he wrought a kind of raft
Of tamarisk, and tamarisk-like sprigs,
And bound them in a lump with withy twigs.

XIV

And on his feet he tied these sandals light,
The trail of whose wide leaves might not betray
His track; and then, a self-sufficing wight,
Like a man hastening on some distant way,
He from Pieria's mountain bent his flight;
But an old man perceived the infant pass
Down green Onchestus heaped like beds with grass.

XV

The old man stood dressing his sunny vine:
"Halloo! old fellow with the crookèd shoulder!
You grub those stumps? before they will bear wine
Methinks even you must grow a little older:
Attend, I pray, to this advice of mine,
As you would 'scape what might appal a bolder:
Seeing, see not—and hearing, hear not—and—
If you have understanding—understand."

XVI

So saying, Hermes roused the oxen vast;
O'er shadowy mountain and resounding dell
And flower-paven plains, great Hermes passed;
Till the black night divine, which favouring fell
Around his steps, grew grey, and morning fast
Wakened the world to work, and from her cell
Sea-strewn, the Pallantean Moon sublime
Into her watch-tower just began to climb.

XVII

Now to Alpheus he had driven all
The broad-foreheaded oxen of the Sun;
They came unwearied to the lofty stall
And to the water-troughs which ever run
Through the fresh fields—and when with rushgrass tall,
Lotus and all sweet herbage, every one
Had pastured been, the great God made them move
Towards the stall in a collected drove.

XVIII

A mighty pile of wood the God then heaped,
And having soon conceived the mystery
Of fire, from two smooth laurel branches stripped
The bark, and rubbed them in his palms;—on high
Suddenly forth the burning vapour leaped
And the divine child saw delightedly.—
Mercury first found out for human weal
Tinder-box, matches, fire-irons, flint and steel.

XIX

And fine dry logs and roots innumerous
He gathered in a delve upon the ground—
And kindled them—and instantaneous
The strength of the fierce flame was breathed around;

And whilst the might of glorious Vulcan thus
Wrapped the great pile with glare and roaring sound
Hermes dragged forth two heifers, lowing loud,
Close to the fire—such might was in the God.

XX

And on the earth upon their backs he threw
The panting beasts, and rolled them o'er and o'er,
And bored their lives out. Without more ado
He cut up fat and flesh, and down before
The fire, on spits of wood he placed the two,
Toasting their flesh and ribs, and all the gore
Pursed in the bowels; and while this was done
He stretched their hides over a craggy stone.

XXI

We mortals let an ox grow old, and then
Cut it up after long consideration,—
But joyous-minded Hermes from the glen
Drew the fat spoils to the more open station
Of a flat smooth space, and portioned them; and when
He had by lot assigned to each a ration
Of the twelve Gods, his mind became aware
Of all the joys which in religion are.

XXII

For the sweet savour of the roasted meat
Tempted him though immortal. Natheless
He checked his haughty will and did not eat,
Though what it cost him words can scarce express,
And every wish to put such morsels sweet
Down his most sacred throat, he did repress;
But soon within the lofty portalled stall
He placed the fat and flesh and bones and all.

XXIII

And every trace of the fresh butchery
And cooking, the God soon made disappear,
As if it all had vanished through the sky;
He burned the hoofs and horns and head and hair,—
The insatiate fire devoured them hungrily;—
And when he saw that everything was clear,
He quenched the coal, and trampled the black dust,
And in the stream his bloody sandals tossed.

XXIV

All night he worked in the serene moonshine.
But when the light of day was spread abroad
He sought his natal mountain-peaks divine.
On his long wandering, neither Man nor God
Had met him, since he killed Apollo's kine,
Nor house-dog had barked at him on his road;
Now he obliquely through the keyhole passed,
Like a thin mist, or an autumnal blast.

XXV

Right through the temple of the spacious cave
He went with soft light feet—as if his tread
Fell not on earth ; no sound their falling gave ;
Then to his cradle he crept quick, and spread
The swaddling-clothes about him ; and the knave
Lay playing with the covering of the bed
With his left hand about his knees—the right
Held his belovèd tortoise-lyre tight.

XXVI

There he lay innocent as a new-born child,
As gossips say ; but though he was a God,
The Goddess, his fair mother, unbeguiled,
Knew all that he had done being abroad :
" Whence come you, and from what adventure wild,
You cunning rogue, and where have you abode
All the long night, clothed in your impudence ?
What have you done since you departed hence ?

XXVII

" Apollo soon will pass within this gate
And bind your tender body in a chain
Inextricably tight, and fast as fate,
Unless you can delude the God again,
Even when within his arms—ah, runagate !
A pretty torment both for Gods and Men
Your father made when he made you ! "—" Dear mother,"
Replied sly Hermes, " wherefore scold and bother ?

XXVIII

" As if I were like other babes as old,
And understood nothing of what is what,
And cared at all to hear my mother scold.
I in my subtle brain a scheme have got,
Which whilst the sacred stars round Heaven are rolled
Will profit you and me—nor shall our lot
Be as you counsel, without gifts or food,
To spend our lives in this obscure abode.

XXIX

" But we will leave this shadow-peopled cave
And live among the Gods, and pass each day
In high communion, sharing what they have
Of profuse wealth and unexhausted prey ;
And from the portion which my father gave
To Phoebus, I will snatch my share away ;
Which if my father will not—nathless I,
Who am the king of robbers, can but try.

XXX

" And, if Latona's son should find me out,
I'll countermine him by a deeper plan ;

I'll pierce the Pythian temple-walls, though stout,
And sack the fane of everything I can—
Caldrons and tripods of great worth no doubt,
Each golden cup and polished brazen pan,
All the wrought tapestries and garments gay."—
So they together talked ;—meanwhile the Day

XXXI

Aethereal born arose out of the flood
Of flowing Ocean, bearing light to men.
Apollo passed toward the sacred wood,
Which from the inmost depths of its green glen
Echoes the voice of Neptune,—and there stood
On the same spot in green Onchestus then
That same old animal, the vine-dresser,
Who was employed hedging his vineyard there.

XXXII

Latona's glorious Son began :—" I pray
Tell, ancient hedger of Onchestus green,
Whether a drove of kine has passed this way,
All heifers with crook'd horns ? for they have been
Stolen from the herd in high Pieria,
Where a black bull was fed apart, between
Two woody mountains in a neighbouring glen,
And four fierce dogs watched there, unanimous as men.

XXXIII

" And what is strange, the author of this theft
Has stolen the fatted heifers every one,
But the four dogs and the black bull are left :—
Stolen they were last night at set of sun,
Of their soft beds and their sweet food bereft.—
Now tell me, man borne ere the world begun,
Have you seen any one pass with the cows ? "—
To whom the man of overhanging brows :

XXXIV

" My friend, it would require no common skill
Justly to speak of everything I see :
On various purposes of good or ill
Many pass by my vineyard,—and to me
'Tis difficult to know the invisible
Thoughts, which in all those many minds may be :—
Thus much alone I certainly can say,
I tilled these vines till the decline of day,

XXXV

" And then I thought I saw, but dare not speak
With certainty of such a wondrous thing,
A child, who could not have been born a week,
Those fair-horned cattle closely following,

And in his hand he held a polished stick :
  And, as on purpose, he walked wavering
From one side to the other of the road,
And with his face opposed the steps he trod."

XXXVI

Apollo hearing this, passed quickly on—
  No wingèd omen could have shown more clear
That the deceiver was his father's son.
  So the God wraps a purple atmosphere
Around his shoulders, and like fire is gone
  To famous Pylos, seeking his kine there,
And found their track and his, yet hardly cold,
And cried—" What wonder do mine eyes behold !

XXXVII

" Here are the footsteps of the hornèd herd
  Turned back towards their fields of asphodel ;—
But *these* are not the tracks of beast or bird,
  Grey wolf, or bear, or lion, of the dell,
Or manèd Centaur—sand was never stirred
  By man or woman thus ! Inexplicable !
Who with unwearied feet could e'er impress
The sand with such enormous vestiges ?

XXXVIII

" That was most strange—but this is stranger still ! "
  Thus having said, Phoebus impetuously
Sought high Cyllene's forest-cinctured hill,
  And the deep cavern where dark shadows lie,
And where the ambrosial nymph with happy will
  Bore the Saturnian's love-child, Mercury—
And a delightful odour from the dew
Of the hill pastures, at his coming, flew.

XXXIX

And Phoebus stooped under the craggy roof
  Arched over the dark cavern :—Maia's child
Perceived that he came angry, far aloof,
  About the cows of which he had been beguiled ;
And over him the fine and fragrant woof
  Of his ambrosial swaddling-clothes he piled—
As among fire-brands lies a burning spark
Covered, beneath the ashes cold and dark.

XL

There, like an infant who had sucked his fill
  And now was newly washed and put to bed,
Awake but courting sleep with weary will,
  And gathered in a lump, hands, feet, and head,
He lay, and his belovèd tortoise still
  He grasped and held under his shoulder-blade.
Phoebus the lovely mountain-goddess knew,
Not less her subtle, swindling baby, who

XLI

Lay swathed in his sly wiles. Round every crook
Of the ample cavern, for his kine, Apollo
Looked sharp; and when he saw them not, he took
The glittering key, and opened three great hollow
Recesses in the rock—where many a nook
Was filled with the sweet food immortals swallow,
And mighty heaps of silver and of gold
Were piled within—a wonder to behold!

XLII

And white and silver robes, all overwrought
With cunning workmanship of tracery sweet—
Except among the Gods there can be nought
In the wide world to be compared with it.
Latona's offspring, after having sought
His herds in every corner, thus did greet
Great Hermes:—"Little cradled rogue, declare
Of my illustrious heifers, where they are!

XLIII

"Speak quickly! or a quarrel between us
Must rise, and the event will be, that I
Shall hurl you into dismal Tartarus,
In fiery gloom to dwell eternally;
Nor shall your father nor your mother loose
The bars of that black dungeon—utterly
You shall be cast out from the light of day,
To rule the ghosts of men, unblessed as they."

XLIV

To whom thus Hermes slily answered:—"Son
Of great Latona, what a speech is this!
Why come you here to ask me what is done
With the wild oxen which it seems you miss?
I have not seen them, nor from any one
Have heard a word of the whole business;
If you should promise an immense reward,
I could not tell more than you now have heard.

XLV

"An ox-stealer should be both tall and strong,
And I am but a little new-born thing,
Who, yet at least, can think of nothing wrong:—
My business is to suck, and sleep, and fling
The cradle-clothes about me all day long,—
Or half asleep, hear my sweet mother sing.
And to be washed in water clean and warm,
And hushed and kissed and kept secure from harm.

XLVI

"O, let not e'er this quarrel be averred!
The astounded Gods would laugh at you, if e'er
You should allege a story so absurd
As that a new-born infant forth could fare

Out of his home after a savage herd.
  I was born yesterday—my small feet are
Too tender for the roads so hard and rough.
And if you think that this is not enough,

XLVII

"I swear a great oath, by my father's head,
  That I stole not your cows, and that I know
Of no one else, who might, or could, or did.—
  Whatever things cows are, I do not know,
For I have only heard the name."—This said,
  He winked as fast as could be, and his brow
Was wrinkled, and a whistle loud gave he,
Like one who hears some strange absurdity.

XLVIII

Apollo gently smiled and said :—" Ay, ay,—
  You cunning little rascal, you will bore
Many a rich man's house, and your array
  Of thieves will lay their siege before his door,
Silent as night, in night; and many a day
  In the wild glens rough shepherds will deplore
That you or yours, having an appetite,
Met with their cattle, comrade of the night!

XLIX

"And this among the Gods shall be your gift,
  To be considered as the lord of those
Who swindle, house-break, sheep-steal, and shop-lift;—
  But now if you would not your last sleep doze,
Crawl out!"—Thus saying, Phoebus did uplift
  The subtle infant in his swaddling clothes,
And in his arms, according to his wont,
A scheme devised the illustrious Argiphont.

L

. . . .
. . . . . .

And sneezed and shuddered—Phoebus on the grass
  Him threw, and whilst all that he had designed
He did perform—eager although to pass,
  Apollo darted from his mighty mind
Towards the subtle babe the following scoff:—
"Do not imagine this will get you off.

LI

"You little swaddled child of Jove and May!"
  And seized him:—" By this omen I shall trace
My noble herds, and you shall lead the way."—
  Cyllenian Hermes from the grassy place,
Like one in earnest haste to get away,
  Rose, and with hands lifted towards his face
Round both his ears up from his shoulders drew
His swaddling clothes, and—" What mean you to do

LII

" With me, you unkind God ? "—said Mercury:
  " Is it about these cows you tease me so?
I wish the race of cows were perished !—I
  Stole not your cows—I do not even know
What things cows are. Alas ! I well may sigh
  That, since I came into this world of woe,
I should have ever heard the name of one—
But I appeal to the Saturnian's throne."

LIII

Thus Phoebus and the vagrant Mercury
  Talked without coming to an explanation,
With adverse purpose. As for Phoebus, he
  Sought not revenge, but only information,
And Hermes tried with lies and roguery
  To cheat Apollo.—But when no evasion
Served—for the cunning one his match had found—
He paced on first over the sandy ground.

LIV

. . . .
  He of the Silver Bow the child of Jove
Followed behind, till to their heavenly Sire
  Came both his children, beautiful as Love,
And from his equal balance did require
  A judgment in the cause wherein they strove.
O'er odorous Olympus and its snows
A murmuring tumult as they came arose,—

LV

And from the folded depths of the great Hill,
  While Hermes and Apollo reverent stood
Before Jove's throne, the indestructible
  Immortals rushed in mighty multitude;
And whilst their seats in order due they fill,
  The lofty Thunderer in a careless mood
To Phoebus said :—" Whence drive you this sweet prey,
This herald-baby, born but yesterday ?—

LVI

" A most important subject, trifler, this
  To lay before the Gods ! "—" Nay, Father, nay,
When you have understood the business,
  Say not that I alone am fond of prey.
I found this little boy in a recess
  Under Cyllene's mountains far away—
A manifest and most apparent thief,
A scandal-monger beyond all belief.

LVII

" I never saw his like either in Heaven
  Or upon earth for knavery or craft :—
Out of the field my cattle yester-even,
  By the low shore on which the loud sea laughed,

He right down to the river-ford had driven ;
  And mere astonishment would make you daft
To see the double kind of footsteps strange
He has impressed wherever he did range.

LVIII

" The cattle's track on the black dust, full well
  Is evident, as if they went towards
The place from which they came—that asphodel
  Meadow, in which I feed my many herds ;
His steps were most incomprehensible—
  I know not how I can describe in words
Those tracks—he could have gone along the sands
Neither upon his feet nor on his hands ;—

LIX

" He must have had some other stranger mode
  Of moving on : those vestiges immense,
Far as I traced them on the sandy road,
  Seemed like the trail of oak-toppings :—but thence
No mark or track denoting where they trod
  The hard ground gave :—but, working at his fence,
A mortal hedger saw him as he passed
To Pylos, with the cows, in fiery haste.

LX

" I found that in the dark he quietly
  Had sacrificed some cows, and before light
Had thrown the ashes all dispersedly
  About the road—then, still as gloomy night,
Had crept into his cradle, either eye
  Rubbing, and cogitating some new sleight.
No eagle could have seen him as he lay
Hid in his cavern from the peering day.

LXI

" I taxed him with the fact, when he averred
  Most solemnly that he did neither see
Nor even had in any manner heard
  Of my lost cows, whatever things cows be ;
Nor could he tell, though offered a reward,
  Not even who could tell of them to me."
So speaking, Phoebus sate ; and Hermes then
Addressed the Supreme Lord of Gods and Men :—

LXII

" Great Father, you know clearly beforehand
  That all which I shall say to you is sooth ;
I am a most veracious person, and
  Totally unacquainted with untruth.
At sunrise Phoebus came, but with no band
  Of Gods to bear him witness, in great wrath,
To my abode, seeking his heifers there,
And saying that I must show him where they are.

LXIII

" Or he would hurl me down the dark abyss.
  I know that every Apollonian limb
Is clothed with speed and might and manliness,
  As a green bank with flowers—but unlike him
I was born yesterday, and you may guess
  He well knew this when he indulged the whim
Of bullying a poor little new-born thing
That slept, and never thought of cow-driving.

LXIV

" Am I like a strong fellow who steals kine ?
  Believe me, dearest Father—such you are—
This driving of the herds is none of mine ;
  Across my threshold did I wander ne'er,
So may I thrive ! I reverence the divine
  Sun and the Gods, and I love you, and care
Even for this hard accuser—who must know
I am as innocent as they or you.

LXV

" I swear by these most gloriously-wrought portals
  (It is, you will allow, an oath of might)
Through which the multitude of the Immortals
  Pass and repass forever, day and night,
Devising schemes for the affairs of mortals—
  That I am guiltless ; and I will requite,
Although mine enemy be great and strong,
His cruel threat—do thou defend the young ! "

LXVI

So speaking, the Cyllenian Argiphont
  Winked, as if now his adversary was fitted :—
And Jupiter, according to his wont,
  Laughed heartily to hear the subtle-witted
Infant give such a plausible account,
  And every word a lie. But he remitted
Judgement at present—and his exhortation
Was, to compose the affair by arbitration.

LXVII

And they by mighty Jupiter were bidden
  To go forth with a single purpose both,
Neither the other chiding nor yet chidden :
  And Mercury with innocence and truth
To lead the way, and show where he had hidden
  The mighty heifers.—Hermes, nothing loth,
Obeyed the Aegis-bearer's will—for he
Is able to persuade all easily.

LXVIII

These lovely children of Heaven's highest Lord
  Hastened to Pylos and the pastures wide
And lofty stalls by the Alphean ford,
  Where wealth in the mute night is multiplied

With silent growth. Whilst Hermes drove the herd
  Out of the stony cavern, Phoebus spied
The hides of those the little babe had slain,
Stretched on the precipice above the plain.

LXIX

"How was it possible," then Phoebus said,
  "That you, a little child, born yesterday,
A thing on mother's milk and kisses fed,
  Could two prodigious heifers ever flay?
Even I myself may well hereafter dread
  Your prowess, offspring of Cyllenian May,
When you grow strong and tall."—He spoke, and bound
Stiff withy bands the infant's wrists around.

LXX

He might as well have bound the oxen wild;
  The withy bands, though starkly interknit,
Fell at the feet of the immortal child,
  Loosened by some device of his quick wit.
Phoebus perceived himself again beguiled,
  And stared—while Hermes sought some hole or pit,
Looking askance and winking fast as thought,
Where he might hide himself and not be caught.

LXXI

Sudden he changed his plan, and with strange skill
  Subdued the strong Latonian, by the might
Of winning music, to his mightier will;
  His left hand held the lyre, and in his right
The plectrum struck the chords—unconquerable
  Up from beneath his hand in circling flight
The gathering music rose—and sweet as Love
The penetrating notes did live and move

LXXII

Within the heart of great Apollo—he
  Listened with all his soul, and laughed for pleasure.
Close to his side stood harping fearlessly
  The unabashèd boy; and to the measure
Of the sweet lyre, there followed loud and free
  His joyous voice; for he unlocked the treasure
Of his deep song, illustrating the birth
Of the bright Gods, and the dark desert Earth:

LXXIII

And how to the Immortals every one
  A portion was assigned of all that is;
But chief Mnemosyne did Maia's son
  Clothe in the light of his loud melodies;
And, as each God was born or had begun,
  He in their order due and fit degrees
Sung of his birth and being—and did move
Apollo to unutterable love.

LXXIV

These words were wingèd with his swift delight:
 "You heifer-stealing schemer, well do you
Deserve that fifty oxen should requite
 Such minstrelsies as I have heard even now.
Comrade of feasts, little contriving wight,
 One of your secrets I would gladly know,
Whether the glorious power you now show forth
Was folded up within you at your birth,

LXXV

"Or whether mortal taught or God inspired
 The power of unpremeditated song?
Many divinest sounds have I admired,
 The Olympian Gods and mortal men among;
But such a strain of wondrous, strange, untired,
 And soul-awakening music, sweet and strong,
Yet did I never hear except from thee,
Offspring of May, impostor Mercury!

LXXVI

"What Muse, what skill, what unimagined use,
 What exercise of subtlest art, has given
Thy songs such power?—for those who hear may choose
 From three, the choicest of the gifts of Heaven,
Delight, and love, and sleep,—sweet sleep whose dews
 Are sweeter than the balmy tears of even:—
And I, who speak this praise, am that Apollo
Whom the Olympian Muses ever follow:

LXXVII

"And their delight is dance, and the blithe noise
 Of song and overflowing poesy;
And sweet, even as desire, the liquid voice
 Of pipes, that fills the clear air thrillingly;
But never did my inmost soul rejoice
 In this dear work of youthful revelry
As now. I wonder at thee, son of Jove;
Thy harpings and thy song are soft as love.

LXXVIII

"Now since thou hast, although so very small,
 Science of arts so glorious, thus I swear,—
And let this cornel javelin, keen and tall,
 Witness between us what I promise here,—
That I will lead thee to the Olympian Hall,
 Honoured and mighty, with thy mother dear,
And many glorious gifts in joy will give thee,
And even at the end will ne'er deceive thee."

LXXIX

To whom thus Mercury with prudent speech:—
 "Wisely hast thou inquirèd of my skill:
I envy thee no thing I know to teach
 Even this day:—for both in word and will

I would be gentle with thee ; thou canst reach
  All things in thy wise spirit, and thy sill
Is highest in Heaven among the sons of Jove,
Who loves thee in the fulness of his love.

LXXX

" The Counsellor Supreme has given to thee
  Divinest gifts, out of the amplitude
Of his profuse exhaustless treasury ;
  By thee, 'tis said, the depths are understood
Of his far voice ; by thee the mystery
  Of all oracular fates,—and the dread mood
Of the diviner is breathed up ; even I—
A child—perceive thy might and majesty.

LXXXI

" Thou canst seek out and compass all that wit
  Can find or teach ;—yet since thou wilt, come take
The lyre—be mine the glory giving it—
  Strike the sweet chords, and sing aloud, and wake
Thy joyous pleasure out of many a fit
  Of trancèd sound—and with fleet fingers make
Thy liquid-voicèd comrade talk with thee,—
It can talk measured music eloquently.

LXXXII

" Then bear it boldly to the revel loud,
  Love-wakening dance, or feast of solemn state,
A joy by night or day—for those endowed
  With art and wisdom who interrogate
It teaches, babbling in delightful mood
  All things which make the spirit most elate,
Soothing the mind with sweet familiar play,
Chasing the heavy shadows of dismay.

LXXXIII

" To those who are unskilled in its sweet tongue,
  Though they should question most impetuously
Its hidden soul, it gossips something wrong—
  Some senseless and impertinent reply.
But thou who art as wise as thou art strong
  Canst compass all that thou desirest. I
Present thee with this music-flowing shell,
Knowing thou canst interrogate it well.

LXXXIV

" And let us two henceforth together feed,
  On this green mountain-slope and pastoral plain,
The herds in litigation—they will breed
  Quickly enough to recompense our pain,
If to the bulls and cows we take good heed ;—
  And thou, though somewhat over fond of gain,
Grudge me not half the profit."—Having spoke,
The shell he proffered, and Apollo took.

LXXXV

And gave him in return the glittering lash,
  Installing him as herdsman ;—from the look
Of Mercury then laughed a joyous flash.
  And then Apollo with the plectrum strook
The chords, and from beneath his hands a crash
  Of mighty sounds rushed up, whose music shook
The soul with sweetness, and like an adept
His sweeter voice a just accordance kept.

LXXXVI

The herd went wandering o'er the divine mead,
  Whilst these most beautiful Sons of Jupiter
Won their swift way up to the snowy head
  Of white Olympus, with the joyous lyre
Soothing their journey ; and their father dread
  Gathered them both into familiar
Affection sweet,—and then, and now, and ever,
Hermes must love Him of the Golden Quiver,

LXXXVII

To whom he gave the lyre that sweetly sounded,
  Which skilfully he held and played thereon.
He piped the while, and far and wide rebounded
  The echo of his pipings ; every one
Of the Olympians sat with joy astounded ;
  While he conceived another piece of fun,
One of his old tricks—which the God of Day
Perceiving, said :—" I fear thee, Son of May ;—

LXXXVIII

" I fear thee and thy sly chameleon spirit,
  Lest thou should steal my lyre and crooked bow ;
This glory and power thou dost from Jove inherit,
To teach all craft upon the earth below ;
Thieves love and worship thee—it is thy merit
  To make all mortal business ebb and flow
By roguery :—now, Hermes, if you dare
By sacred Styx a mighty oath to swear

LXXXIX

" That you will never rob me, you will do
  A thing extremely pleasing to my heart."
Then Mercury sware by the Stygian dew,
  That he would never steal his bow or dart,
Or lay his hands on what to him was due,
  Or ever would employ his powerful art
Against his Pythian fane. Then Phoebus swore
There was no God or Man whom he loved more.

XC

" And I will give thee as a good-will token,
  The beautiful wand of wealth and happiness ;
A perfect three-leaved rod of gold unbroken,
  Whose magic will thy footsteps ever bless ;

And whatsoever by Jove's voice is spoken
  Of earthly or divine from its recess,
It, like a loving soul, to thee will speak,
And more than this, do thou forbear to seek.

XCI

"For, dearest child, the divinations high
  Which thou requirest, 'tis unlawful ever
That thou, or any other deity
  Should understand—and vain were the endeavour;
For they are hidden in Jove's mind, and I,
  In trust of them, have sworn that I would never
Betray the counsels of Jove's inmost will
To any God—the oath was terrible.

XCII

"Then, golden-wanded brother, ask me not
  To speak the fates by Jupiter designed;
But be it mine to tell their various lot
  To the unnumbered tribes of human-kind.
Let good to these, and ill to those be wrought
  As I dispense—but he who comes consigned
By voice and wings of perfect augury
To my great shrine, shall find avail in me.

XCIII

"Him will I not deceive, but will assist;
  But he who comes relying on such birds
As chatter vainly, who would strain and twist
  The purpose of the Gods with idle words,
And deems their knowledge light, he shall have missed
  His road—whilst I among my other hoards
His gifts deposit. Yet, O son of May,
I have another wondrous thing to say.

XCIV

"There are three Fates, three virgin Sisters, who
  Rejoicing in their wind-outspeeding wings,
Their heads with flour snowed over white and new,
  Sit in a vale round which Parnassus flings
Its circling skirts—from these I have learned true
  Vaticinations of remotest things.
My father cared not. Whilst they search out dooms,
They sit apart and feed on honey combs.

XCV

"They, having eaten the fresh honey, grow
  Drunk with divine enthusiasm, and utter
With earnest willingness the truth they know;
  But if deprived of that sweet food, they mutter
All plausible delusions;—these to you
  I give;—if you require, they will not stutter;
Delight your own soul with them:—any man
You would instruct may profit if he can.

XCVI

" Take these and the fierce oxen, Maia's child—
O'er many a horse and toil-enduring mule,
O'er jaggèd-jawèd lions, and the wild
White-tuskèd boars, o'er all, by field or pool,
Of cattle which the Mighty mother mild
Nourishes in her bosom, thou shalt rule—
Thou dost alone the veil from death uplift—
Thou givest not—yet this is a great gift."

XCVII

Thus King Apollo loved the child of May
In truth, and Jove covered their love with joy.
Hermes with Gods and Men even from that day
Mingled, and wrought the latter much annoy,
And little profit, going far astray
Through the dun night. Farewell, delightful Boy,
Of Jove and Maia sprung,—never by me,
Nor thou, nor other songs, shall unremembered be.

EPIGRAMS

[Publ. 1839, 1st ed.]

I. TO STELLA

FROM THE GREEK OF PLATO

THOU wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled ;—
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.

II. FROM PLATO

KISSING Helena, together
With my kiss, my soul beside it
Came to my lips, and there I kept it.
For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh, cruel I, to intercept it!

III. SPIRIT OF PLATO

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK

EAGLE! Why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and star-ypaven home
Floatest thou ?—
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven ; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below.

IV. From the Greek

A man who was about to hang himself,
  Finding a purse, then threw away his rope;
The owner, coming to reclaim his pelf,
  The halter found and used it. So is Hope,
Changed for Despair—one laid upon the shelf,
  We take the other. Under Heaven's high cope
Fortune is God—all you endure and do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.

FROM VERGIL'S TENTH ECLOGUE

[Publ. 1903.]

Melodious Arethusa, o'er my verse
  Shed thou once more the spirit of thy stream:

(Two lines missing)

Who denies verse to Gallus? So, when thou
  Glidest beneath the green and purple gleam
Of Syracusan waters, mayest thou flow
  Unmingled with the bitter Dorian dew!
Begin, and whilst the goats are browsing now
  The soft leaves, in our song let us pursue
The melancholy loves of Gallus. List!
  We sing not to the deaf: the wild woods knew
His sufferings, and their echoes answer . . . .
  Young Naiades, in what far woodlands wild
Wandered ye, when unworthy love possessed
  Our Galus? Nor where Pindus is up-piled
Nor where Parnassus' sacred mount, nor where
  Aonian Aganippe spreads its . . . .

(Three lines missing)

  The laurels and the myrtle-copses dim,
The pine-encircled mountain, Maenalus,
  The cold crags of Lycaeus weep for him.

(Several lines missing)

"What madness is this, Gallus? thy heart's care,
  Lycoris, mid rude camps and Alpine snow,
With willing step pursues another there."

(Some lines missing)

And Sylvan, crowned with rustic coronals,
Came shaking in his speed the budding wands
And heavy lilies which he bore: we knew
Pan the Arcadian with . . . .
. . . and said,
"Wilt thou not ever cease? Love cares not.
The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding spring
Are saturated not—nor Love with tears."

FROM VERGIL'S FOURTH GEORGIC

[Vv. 360-373.]

[Publ. 1903.]

And the cloven waters like a chasm of mountains
Stood, and received him in its mighty portal
And led him through the deep's untrampled fountains.

He went in wonder through the path immortal
Of his great Mother and her humid reign
And groves profaned not by the step of mortal

Which sounded as he passed, and lakes which rain
Replenished not, girt round by marble caves.
'Wildered by the watery motion of the main

Half 'wildered he beheld the bursting waves
Of every stream beneath the mighty earth
Phasis and Lycus which the   sand paves,

The chasm where old Enipeus has its birth
And father Tyber and Anienes glow
And whence Caicus, Mysian stream, comes forth

And rock-resounding Hypanis, and thou
Eridanus who bearest like empire's sign
Two golden horns upon thy taurine brow

Thou than whom none of the streams divine
Through garden-fields and meads with fiercer power
Burst in their tumult on the purple brine.

THE FIRST CANZONE OF THE CONVITO

From the Italian of Dante

[1820? Publ. 1862.]

I

Ye who intelligent the Third Heaven move,
Hear the discourse which is within my heart,
  Which cannot be declared, it seems so new.
The Heaven whose course follows your power and art,
  Oh, gentle creatures that ye are! me drew,
  And therefore may I dare to speak to you,
Even of the life which now I live—and yet
  I pray that ye will hear me when I cry,
  And tell of mine own heart this novelty;
How the lamenting Spirit moans in it,
And how a voice there murmurs against her
Who came on the refulgence of your sphere.

II

A sweet Thought, which was once the life within
This heavy heart, many a time and oft
Went up before our Father's feet, and there
It saw a glorious Lady throned aloft;
And its sweet talk of her my soul did win,
So that I said, "Thither I too will fare."
That Thought is fled, and one doth now appear
Which tyrannizes me with such fierce stress,
That my heart trembles—ye may see it leap—
And on another Lady bids me keep
Mine eyes, and says, "Who would have blessedness
Let him but look upon that Lady's eyes,
Let him not fear the agony of sighs."

III

This lowly Thought, which once would talk with me
Of a bright seraph sitting crowned on high,
Found such a cruel foe it died, and so
My Spirit wept, the grief is hot even now—
And said, "Alas for me! how swift could flee
That piteous Thought which did my life console!"
And the afflicted one questioning
Mine eyes, if such a Lady saw they never,
And why they would . . .
I said: "Beneath those eyes might stand for ever
He whom regards must kill with . . .
To have known their power stood me in little stead,
Those eyes have looked on me, and I am dead."

IV

"Thou art not dead, but thou hast wanderèd,
Thou Soul of ours, who thyself dost fret,"
A Spirit of gentle Love beside me said;
"For that fair Lady, whom thou dost regret,
Hath so transformed the life which thou hast led,
Thou scornest it, so worthless art thou made.
And see how meek, how pitiful, how staid,
Yet courteous, in her majesty she is.
And still call thou her Woman in thy thought;
Her whom, if thou thyself deceivest not,
Thou wilt behold decked with such loveliness,
That thou wilt cry [Love] only Lord, lo! here
Thy handmaiden, do what thou wilt with her."

V

My song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain.
Whence, if by misadventure chance should bring
Thee to base company, as chance may do,
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee comfort thy sweet self again,
My last delight; tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

MATILDA GATHERING FLOWERS

From the Purgatorio of Dante, Canto xxviii. ll. 1-51

[1820? Publ. 1834, 1862.]

And earnest to explore within—around—
The divine wood, whose thick green living woof
Tempered the young day to the sight—I wound

Up the green slope, beneath the forest's roof,
With slow, soft steps leaving the mountain's steep,
And sought those inmost labyrinths, motion-proof

Against the air, that in that stillness deep
And solemn, struck upon my forehead bare,
The slow, soft stroke of a continuous . . . *

In which the leaves tremblingly were
All bent towards that part where earliest
The sacred hill obscures the morning air.

Yet were they not so shaken from the rest,
But that the birds, perched on the utmost spray,
Incessantly renewing their blithe quest,

With perfect joy received the early day,
Singing within the glancing leaves, whose sound
Kept a low burden to their roundelay,

Such as from bough to bough gathers around
The pine forest on bleak Chiassi's shore,
When Aeolus Sirocco has unbound.

My slow steps had already borne me o'er
Such space within the antique wood, that I
Perceived not where I entered any more,—

When, lo! a stream whose little waves went by,
Bending towards the left through grass that grew
Upon its bank, impeded suddenly

My going on. Water of purest hue
On earth, would appear turbid and impure
Compared with this, whose unconcealing dew,

---

* 9-28 *So* 1862;
Like the sweet breathing of a child asleep:

Already I had lost myself so far
Amid that tangled wilderness that I
Perceived not where I ventured, but no fear

Of wandering from my way disturbed, when nigh
A little stream appeared; the grass that grew
Thick on its banks impeded suddenly

My going on. 1834.

Dark, dark, yet clear, moved under the obscure
Eternal shades, whose interwoven looms
The rays of moon or sunlight ne'er endure.

I moved not with my feet, but mid the glooms
Pierced with my charmèd eye, contemplating
The mighty multitude of fresh May blooms

Which starred that night, when, even as a thing
That suddenly, for blank astonishment,
Charms every sense, and makes all thought take wing,—

A solitary woman! and she went
Singing and gathering flower after flower,
With which her way was painted and besprent.

"Bright lady, who, if looks had ever power
To bear true witness of the heart within,
Dost bask under the beams of love, come lower

Towards this bank. I prithee let me win
This much of thee, to come, that I may hear
Thy song: like Proserpine, in Enna's glen,

Thou seemest to my fancy, singing here
And gathering flowers, as that fair maiden when
She lost the Spring, and Ceres her, more dear."

UGOLINO

Inferno xxxiii. 22-75

[Trans. by Medwin. Shelley's corrections in italics. Publ. 1847.]

Now had the loophole of that dungeon, still
Which bears the name of Famine's Tower from me,
And where 'tis fit that many another will

Be doomed to linger in captivity,
Shown through its narrow opening in my cell
Moon after moon slow waning, when a sleep,

That of the future burst the veil, in dream
Visited me. It was a slumber deep
And evil; for I saw, or I did seem

To see, *that* tyrant Lord his revels keep,
The leader of the cruel hunt to them,
Chasing the wolf and wolf-cubs up the steep

Ascent, that from *the Pisan is the screen*
Of *Lucca*; with him Gualandi came,
Sismondi, and Lanfranchi, *bloodhounds lean*,

Trained to the sport and eager for the game
Wide ranging in his front; but soon were seen
Though by so short a course, with *spirits tame,*

The father and *his whelps* to flag at once,
And then the sharp fangs gored their bosoms deep.
Ere morn I roused myself, and heard my sons,

For they were with me, moaning in their sleep,
And begging bread. Ah, for those darling ones!
Right cruel art thou, if thou dost not weep

In thinking of my soul's sad augury;
And if thou weepest not now, weep never more!
They were already waked, as wont drew nigh

The allotted hour for food, and in that hour
Each drew a presage from his dream. When I
Heard locked beneath me of that horrible tower

The outlet, then into their eyes alone
I looked to read myself, without a sign
Or word. I wept not—turned within to stone.

They wept aloud, and little Anselm mine,
Said—'twas my youngest, dearest little one,—
"What ails thee, father? Why look so at thine?"

In all that day, and all the following night,
I wept not, nor replied; but when to shine
Upon the world, not us, came forth the light

Of the new sun, and thwart my prison thrown
Gleamed through its narrow chink, a doleful sight,
Three faces, each the reflex of my own,

Were imaged by its faint and ghastly ray;
Then I, of either hand unto the bone,
Gnawed, in my agony; and thinking they

'Twas done from sudden pangs, in their excess,
All of a sudden raise themselves, and say,
"Father! our woes, so great, were yet the less

"Would you but eat of us,—'twas *you who clad*
Our bodies in these weeds of wretchedness;
Despoil them." Not to make their hearts more sad,

I *hushed* myself. That day is at its close,—
Another—still we were all mute. Oh, had
The obdurate earth opened to end our woes!

The fourth day dawned, and when the new sun shone,
Outstretched himself before me as it rose
My Gaddo, saying, "Help, father! hast thou none

"For thine own child—is there no help from thee ?"
He died—there at my feet—and one by one,
I saw them fall, plainly as you see me.

Between the fifth and sixth day, ere 'twas dawn,
I found *myself blind-groping o'er the three.*
Three days I called them after they were gone.

Famine of grief can get the mastery.

SCENES FROM THE MAGICO PRODIGIOSO

From the Spanish of Calderon

[March 1822. Publ. 1824.]

Scene I.—*Enter* Cyprian, *dressed as a Student ;* Clarin *and* Moscon *as poor Scholars, with books.*

Cyprian. In the sweet solitude of this calm place,
This intricate wild wilderness of trees
And flowers and undergrowth of odorous plants,
Leave me ; the books you brought out of the house
To me are ever best society,
And while with glorious festival and song,
Antioch now celebrates the consecration
Of a proud temple to great Jupiter,
And bears his image in loud jubilee
To its new shrine, I would consume what still
Lives of the dying day in studious thought,
Far from the throng and turmoil. You, my friends,
Go, and enjoy the festival ; it will
Be worth your pains. You may return for me
When the sun seeks its grave among the billows
Which, among dim grey clouds on the horizon,
Dance like white plumes upon a hearse ;—and here
I shall expect you.
Moscon. I cannot bring my mind,
Great as my haste to see the festival
Certainly is, to leave you, Sir, without
Just saying some three or four thousand words.
How is it possible that on a day
Of such festivity, you can be content
To come forth to a solitary country
With three or four old books, and turn your back
On all this mirth ?
Clarin. My master's in the right ;
There is not anything more tiresome
Than a procession day, with troops, and priests,
And dances, and all that.
Moscon. From first to last,
Clarin, you are a temporizing flatterer ;
You praise not what you feel but what he does ;—
Toadeater !

Clarin. You lie—under a mistake—
For this is the most civil sort of lie
That can be given to a man's face. I now
Say what I think.
Cyprian. Enough, you foolish fellows!
Puffed up with your own doting ignorance,
You always take the two sides of one question.
Now go; and as I said, return for me
When night falls, veiling in its shadows wide
This glorious fabric of the universe.
Moscon. How happens it, although you can maintain
The folly of enjoying festivals,
That yet you go there?
Clarin. Nay, the consequence
Is clear:—who ever did what he advises
Others to do?—
Moscon. Would that my feet were wings,
So would I fly to Livia. [*Exit.*
Clarin. To speak truth,
Livia is she who has surprised my heart;
But he is more than half-way there.—Soho!
Livia, I come; good sport, Livia, soho! [*Exit.*
Cyprian. Now, since I am alone, let me examine
The question which has long disturbed my mind
With doubt, since first I read in Plinius
The words of mystic import and deep sense
In which he defines God. My intellect
Can find no God with whom these marks and signs
Fitly agree. It is a hidden truth
Which I must fathom.
[CYPRIAN *reads*; *the* DAEMON, *dressed in a Court dress, enters.*
Daemon. Search even as thou wilt,
But thou shalt never find what I can hide.
Cyprian. What noise is that among the boughs? Who moves?
What art thou?—
Daemon 'Tis a foreign gentleman.
Even from this morning I have lost my way
In this wild place; and my poor horse at last,
Quite overcome, has stretched himself upon
The enamelled tapestry of this mossy mountain,
And feeds and rests at the same time. I was
Upon my way to Antioch upon business
Of some importance, but wrapt up in cares
(Who is exempt from this inheritance?)
I parted from my company and lost
My way, and lost my servants and my comrades.
Cyprian. 'Tis singular that even within the sight
Of the high towers of Antioch you could lose
Your way. Of all the avenues and green paths
Of this wild wood there is not one but leads,
As to its centre, to the walls of Antioch;
Take which you will, you cannot miss your road.
Daemon. And such is ignorance! Even in the sight
Of knowledge, it can draw no profit from it.

But as it still is early, and as I
Have no acquaintances in Antioch,
Being a stranger there, I will even wait
The few surviving hours of the day,
Until the night shall conquer it. I see
Both by your dress and by the books in which
You find delight and company, that you
Are a great student ;—for my part, I feel
Much sympathy in such pursuits.
Cyprian. Have you
Studied much ?
Daemon. No,—and yet I know enough
Not to be wholly ignorant.
Cyprian. Pray, Sir,
What science may you know ?—
Daemon. Many.
Cyprian. Alas !
Much pains must we expend on one alone
And even then attain it not ;—but you
Have the presumption to assert that you
Know many without study.
Daemon. And with truth.
For in the country whence I come the sciences
Require no learning,—they are known.
Cyprian. Oh, would
I were of that bright country ! for in this
The more we study, we the more discover
Our ignorance.
Daemon. It is so true, that I
Had so much arrogance as to oppose
The chair of the most high Professorship,
And obtained many votes, and, though I lost,
The attempt was still more glorious, than the failure
Could be dishonourable. If you believe not,
Let us refer it to dispute respecting
That which you know the best, and although I
Know not the opinion you maintain, and though
It be the true one, I will take the contrary.
Cyprian. The offer gives me pleasure. I am now
Debating with myself upon a passage
Of Plinius, and my mind is racked with doubt
To understand and know who is the God
Of whom he speaks.
Daemon. It is a passage, if
I recollect it right, couched in these words :
" God is one supreme goodness, one pure essence,
One substance, and one sense, all sight, all hands."
Cyprian. 'Tis true.
Daemon. What difficulty find you here ?
Cyprian. I do not recognize among the Gods
The God defined by Plinius ; if he must
Be supreme goodness, even Jupiter
Is not supremely good ; because we see
His deeds are evil, and his attributes
Tainted with mortal weakness ; in what manner

Can supreme goodness be consistent with
The passions of humanity?
Daemon. The wisdom
Of the old world masked with the names of Gods
The attributes of Nature and of Man;
A sort of popular philosophy.
Cyprian. This reply will not satisfy me, for
Such awe is due to the high name of God
That ill should never be imputed. Then,
Examining the question with more care,
It follows, that the Gods would always will
That which is best, were they supremely good.
How then does one will one thing, one another?
And that you may not say that I allege
Poetical or philosophical learning:—
Consider the ambiguous responses
Of their oracular statues; from two shrines
Two armies shall obtain the assurance of
One victory. Is it not indisputable
That two contending wills can never lead
To the same end? And, being opposite,
If one be good, is not the other evil?
Evil in God is inconceivable;
But supreme goodness fails among the Gods
Without their union.
Daemon. I deny your major.
These responses are means towards some end
Unfathomed by our intellectual beam.
They are the work of Providence, and more
The battle's loss may profit those who lose,
Than victory advantage those who win.
Cyprian. That I admit; and yet that God should not
(Falsehood is incompatible with deity)
Assure the victory; it would be enough
To have permitted the defeat. If God
Be all sight,—God, who had beheld the truth,
Would not have given assurance of an end
Never to be accomplished: thus, although
The Deity may according to his attributes
Be well distinguished into persons, yet
Even in the minutest circumstance
His essence must be one.
Daemon. To attain the end
The affections of the actors in the scene
Must have been thus influenced by his voice.
Cyprian. But for a purpose thus subordinate
He might have employed Genii, good or evil,—
A sort of spirits called so by the learned,
Who roam about inspiring good or evil,
And from whose influence and existence we
May well infer our immortality.
Thus God might easily, without descent
To a gross falsehood in his proper person,
Have moved the affections by this mediation
To the just point.

Daemon. These trifling contradictions
Do not suffice to impugn the unity
Of the high Gods; in things of great importance
They still appear unanimous; consider
That glorious fabric, man,—his workmanship
Is stamped with one conception.
Cyprian. Who made man
Must have, methinks, the advantage of the others.
If they are equal, might they not have risen
In opposition to the work, and being
All hands, according to our author here,
Have still destroyed even as the other made?
If equal in their power, unequal only
In opportunity, which of the two
Will remain conqueror?
Daemon. On impossible
And false hypothesis there can be built
No argument. Say, what do you infer
From this?
Cyprian. That there must be a mighty God
Of supreme goodness and of highest grace,
All sight, all hands, all truth, infallible,
Without an equal and without a rival,
The cause of all things and the effect of nothing,
One power, one will, one substance, and one essence.
And, in whatever persons, one or two,
His attributes may be distinguished, one
Sovereign power, one solitary essence,
One cause of all cause. [*They rise.*
Daemon. How can I impugn
So clear a consequence?
Cyprian. Do you regret
My victory?
Daemon. Who but regrets a check
In rivalry of wit? I could reply
And urge new difficulties, but will now
Depart, for I hear steps of men approaching,
And it is time that I should now pursue
My journey to the city.
Cyprian. Go in peace!
Daemon. Remain in peace!—Since thus it profits him
To study, I will wrap his senses up
In sweet oblivion of all thought but of
A piece of excellent beauty; and, as I
Have power given me to wage enmity
Against Justina's soul, I will extract
From one effect two vengeances. [*Aside and exit.*
Cyprian. I never
Met a more learnèd person. Let me now
Revolve this doubt again with careful mind. [*He reads.*

FLORO *and* LELIO *enter*

Lelio. Here stop. These toppling rocks and tangled boughs,
Impenetrable by the noonday beam,
Shall be sole witnesses of what we——

Floro. Draw !
If there were words, here is the place for deeds.
Lelio. Thou needest not instruct me ; well I know
That in the field, the silent tongue of steel
Speaks thus,— [*They fight.*
Cyprian. Ha ! what is this ? Lelio,—Floro,
Be it enough that Cyprian stands between you,
Although unarmed.
Lelio. Whence comest thou, to stand
Between me and my vengeance ?
Floro. From what rocks
And desert cells ?

Enter Moscon *and* Clarin

Moscon. Run ! run ! for where we left
My master, I now hear the clash of swords,
Clarin. I never run to approach things of this sort,
But only to avoid them. Sir ! Cyprian ! sir !
Cyprian. Be silent, fellows ! What ! two friends who are
In blood and fame the eyes and hope of Antioch,
One of the noble race of the Colalti,
The other son o' the Governor, adventure
And cast away, on some slight cause no doubt,
Two lives, the honour of their country ?
Lelio. Cyprian !
Although my high respect towards your person
Holds now my sword suspended, thou canst not
Restore it to the slumber of the scabbard :
Thou knowest more of science than the duel ;
For when two men of honour take the field,
No counsel nor respect can make them friends
But one must die in the dispute.
Floro. I pray
That you depart hence with your people, and
Leave us to finish what we have begun
Without advantage.—
Cyprian. Though you may imagine
That I know little of the laws of duel,
Which vanity and valour instituted,
You are in error. By my birth I am
Held no less than yourselves to know the limits
Of honour and of infamy, nor has study
Quenched the free spirit which first ordered them ;
And thus to me, as one well experienced
In the false quicksands of the sea of honour,
You may refer the merits of the case ;
And if I should perceive in your relation
That either has the right to satisfaction
From the other, I give you my word of honour
To leave you.
Lelio. Under this condition then
I will relate the cause, and you will cede
And must confess the impossibility
Of compromise ; for the same lady is
Beloved by Floro and myself.

Floro. It seems
Much to me that the light of day should look
Upon that idol of my heart—but he—
Leave us to fight, according to thy word.
Cyprian. Permit one question further: is the lady
Impossible to hope or not?
Lelio. She is
So excellent, that if the light of day
Should excite Floro's jealousy, it were
Without just cause, for even the light of day
Trembles to gaze on her.
Cyprian. Would you for your
Part, marry her?
Floro. Such is my confidence.
Cyprian. And you?
Lelio. Oh! would that I could lift my hope
So high, for though she is extremely poor,
Her virtue is her dowry.
Cyprian. And if you both
Would marry her, is it not weak and vain,
Culpable and unworthy, thus beforehand
To slur her honour? What would the world say
If one should slay the other, and if she
Should afterwards espouse the murderer?
[*The rivals agree to refer their quarrel to* CYPRIAN; *who in consequence visits* JUSTINA, *and becomes enamoured of her; she disdains him, and he retires to a solitary sea-shore.*

SCENE II

Cyprian

O memory! permit it not
That the tyrant of my thought
Be another soul that still
Holds dominion o'er the will,
That would refuse, but can no more,
To bend, to tremble, and adore.
Vain idolatry!—I saw,
And gazing, became blind with error;
Weak ambition, which the awe
Of her presence bound to terror!
So beautiful she was—and I,
Between my love and jealousy,
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear;—
So bitter is the life I live,
That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pine,
So this woman may be mine.
Hear'st thou, Hell! dost thou reject it?
My soul is offered!
Daemon (*unseen*). I accept it.
[*Tempest, with thunder and lightning.*

Cyprian

What is this ? ye heavens for ever pure,
At once intensely radiant and obscure !
Athwart the aetherial halls
The lightning's arrow and the thunder-balls
The day affright,
As from the horizon round,
Burst with earthquake sound,
In mighty torrents the electric fountains ;—
Clouds quench the sun, and thunder-smoke
Strangles the air, and fire eclipses Heaven.
Philosophy, thou canst not even
Compel their causes underneath thy yoke :
From yonder clouds even to the waves below
The fragments of a single ruin choke
Imagination's flight ;
For, on flakes of surge, like feathers light,
The ashes of the desolation, cast
Upon the gloomy blast,
Tell of the footsteps of the storm ;
And nearer, see, the melancholy form
Of a great ship, the outcast of the sea
Drives miserably !
And it must fly the pity of the port,
Or perish, and its last and sole resort
Is its own raging enemy.
The terror of the thrilling cry
Was a fatal prophecy
Of coming death, who hovers now
Upon that shattered prow,
That they who die not may be dying still.
And not alone the insane elements
Are populous with wild portents,
But that sad ship is as a miracle
Of sudden ruin, for it drives so fast
It seems as if it had arrayed its form
With the headlong storm.
It strikes—I almost feel the shock,—
It stumbles on a jaggèd rock,—
Sparkles of blood on the white foam are cast.
[*A tempest.*

All exclaim (*within*). We are all lost !
Daemon (*within*). Now from this plank will I
Pass to the land and thus fulfil my scheme.

Cyprian

As in contempt of the elemental rage
A man comes forth in safety, while the ship's
Great form is in a watery eclipse
Obliterated from the Ocean's page,
And round its wreck the huge sea-monsters sit,
A horrid conclave, and the whistling wave
Is heaped over its carcase, like a grave.
The Daemon *enters, as escaped from the sea*

Daemon (*aside*). It was essential to my purposes
To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,
That in this unknown form I might at length
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
Sustained upon the mountain, and assail
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forging the instruments of his destruction
Even from his love and from his wisdom.—O
Belovèd earth, dear mother, in thy bosom
I seek a refuge from the monster who
Precipitates itself upon me.
Cyprian. Friend,
Collect thyself ; and be the memory
Of thy late suffering, and thy greatest sorrow
But as a shadow of the past,—for nothing
Beneath the circle of the moon, but flows
And changes, and can never know repose.
Daemon. And who art thou, before whose feet my fate
Has prostrated me ?
Cyprian. One who, moved with pity,
Would soothe its stings.
Daemon. Oh, that can never be !
No solace can my lasting sorrows find.
Cyprian. Wherefore ?
Daemon. Because my happiness is lost.
Yet I lament what has long ceased to be
The object of desire or memory,
And my life is not life.
Cyprian. Now, since the fury
Of this earthquaking hurricane is still,
And the crystalline Heaven has reassumed
Its windless calm so quickly, that it seems
As if its heavy wrath had been awakened
Only to overwhelm that vessel,—speak,
Who art thou, and whence comest thou ?
Daemon. Far more
My coming hither cost, than thou hast seen
Or I can tell. Among my misadventures
This shipwreck is the least. Wilt thou hear ?
Cyprian. Speak.
Daemon. Since thou desirest, I will then unveil
Myself to thee ;—for in myself I am
A world of happiness and misery ;
This I have lost, and that I must lament
Forever. In my attributes I stood
So high and so heroically great,
In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
Which penetrated with a glance the world
Beneath my feet, that, won by my high merit,
A king—whom I may call the King of kings,
Because all others tremble in their pride
Before the terrors of His countenance,
In His high palace roofed with brightest gems
Of living light—call them the stars of Heaven—
Named me His counsellor. But the high praise

Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition, to ascend
His seat and place my foot triumphantly
Upon His subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls; too mad
Was the attempt, and yet more mad were now
Repentance of the irrevocable deed:—
Therefore I chose this ruin, with the glory
Of not to be subdued, before the shame
Of reconciling me with Him who reigns
By coward cession.—Nor was I alone,
Nor am I now, nor shall I be alone;
And there was hope, and there may still be hope,
For many suffrages among His vassals
Hailed me their lord and king, and many still
Are mine, and many more, perchance shall be.
Thus vanquished, though in fact victorious,
I left His seat of empire, from mine eye
Shooting forth poisonous lightning, while my words
With inauspicious thunderings shook Heaven,
Proclaiming vengeance, public as my wrong,
And imprecating on His prostrate slaves
Rapine, and death, and outrage. Then I sailed
Over the mighty fabric of the world,—
A pirate ambushed in its pathless sands,
A lynx crouched watchfully among its caves
And craggy shores; and I have wandered over
The expanse of these wide wildernesses
In this great ship, whose bulk is now dissolved
In the light breathings of the invisible wind,
And which the sea has made a dustless ruin,
Seeking ever a mountain, through whose forests
I seek a man, whom I must now compel
To keep his word with me. I came arrayed
In tempest, and although my power could well
Bridle the forest winds in their career,
For other causes I forbore to soothe
Their fury to Favonian gentleness;
I could and would not; (thus I wake in him [*Aside.*
A love of magic art). Let not this tempest,
Nor the succeeding calm excite thy wonder;
For by my art the sun would turn as pale
As his weak sister with unwonted fear;
And in my wisdom are the orbs of Heaven
Written as in a record; I have pierced
The flaming circles of their wondrous spheres
And know them as thou knowest every corner
Of this dim spot. Let it not seem to thee
That I boast vainly; wouldst thou that I work
A charm over this waste and savage wood,
This Babylon of crags and agèd trees,
Filling its leafy coverts with a horror
Thrilling and strange? I am the friendless guest
Of these wild oaks and pines—and as from thee
I have received the hospitality

Of this rude place, I offer thee the fruit
Of years of toil in recompense; whate'er
Thy wildest dream presented to thy thought
As object of desire, that shall be thine.

. . . . . .

And thenceforth shall so firm an amity
'Twixt thee and me be, that neither Fortune,
The monstrous phantom which pursues success,
That careful miser, that free prodigal,
Who ever alternates, with changeful hand,
Evil and good, reproach and fame; nor Time.
That lodestar of the ages, to whose beam
The wingèd years speed o'er the intervals
Of their unequal revolutions; nor
Heaven itself, whose beautiful bright stars
Rule and adorn the world, can ever make
The least division between thee and me,
Since now I find a refuge in thy favour.

SCENE III.—*The* DAEMON *tempts* JUSTINA, *who is a Christian.*

Daemon

Abyss of Hell! I call on thee,
Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
From thy prison-house set free
The spirits of voluptuous death,
That with their mighty breath
They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts;
Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
Be peopled from thy shadowy deep,
Till her guiltless phantasy
Full to overflowing be!
And with sweetest harmony,
Let birds, and flowers, and leaves, and all things move
To love, only to love.
Let nothing meet her eyes
But signs of Love's soft victories;
Let nothing meet her ear
But sounds of Love's sweet sorrow.
So that from faith no succour she may borrow,
But, guided by my spirit blind
And in a magic snare entwined,
She may now seek Cyprian.
Begin, while I in silence bind
My voice, when thy sweet song thou hast began.

A Voice (within)

What is the glory far above
All else in human life?

All

Love! love!

[*While these words are sung, the* DAEMON *goes out at one door, and* JUSTINA *enters at another.*

The First Voice

There is no form in which the fire
Of love its traces has impressed not.

Man lives far more in love's desire
  Than by life's breath, soon possessed not.
If all that lives must love or die,
All shapes on earth, or sea, or sky,
With one consent to Heaven cry
That the glory far above
All else in life is—

All

Love! oh, Love!

Justina

  Thou melancholy Thought which art
So flattering and so sweet, to thee
When did I give the liberty
  Thus to afflict my heart?
What is the cause of this new Power
  Which doth my fevered being move,
Momently raging more and more?
What subtle Pain is kindled now
Which from my heart doth overflow
  Into my senses?—

All

Love! oh, Love!

Justina

'Tis that enamoured Nightingale
  Who gives me the reply;
He ever tells the same soft tale
  Of passion and of constancy
To his mate, who rapt and fond,
Listening sits, a bough beyond.

Be silent, Nightingale—no more
  Make me think, in hearing thee
Thus tenderly thy love deplore,
    If a bird can feel his so,
  What a man would feel for me.
    And, voluptuous Vine, O thou
Who seekest most when least pursuing,—
  To the trunk thou interlacest
  Art the verdure which embracest,
And the weight which is its ruin,—
No more, with green embraces, Vine,
  Make me think on what thou lovest,—
For whilst thus thy boughs entwine,
  I fear lest thou shouldst teach me, sophist,
How arms might be entangled too.

Light-enchanted Sunflower, thou
Who gazest ever true and tender
On the sun's revolving splendour!
Follow not his faithless glance
With thy faded countenance,
Nor teach my beating heart to fear,
If leaves can mourn without a tear,

How eyes must weep ! O Nightingale,
Cease from thy enamoured tale,—
Leafy Vine, unwreathe thy bower,
  Restless Sunflower, cease to move,—
Or tell me all, what poisonous Power
  Ye use against me—

All

Love ! Love ! Love !

Justina. It cannot be !—Whom have I ever loved ?
Trophies of my oblivion and disdain,
Floro and Lelio did I not reject ?
And Cyprian ?— [*She becomes troubled at the name of Cyprian.*
Did I not requite him
With such severity, that he has fled
Where none has ever heard of him again ?—
Alas ! I now begin to fear that this
May be the occasion whence desire grows bold,
As if there were no danger. From the moment
That I pronounced to my own listening heart,
" Cyprian is absent ! "—O me miserable !
I know not what I feel ! [*More calmly.*] It must be pity
To think that such a man, whom all the world
Admired, should be forgot by all the world.
And I the cause. [*She again becomes troubled.*
And yet if it were pity,
Floro and Lelio might have equal share,
For they are both imprisoned for my sake.
(*Calmly.*) Alas ! what reasonings are these ? it is
Enough I pity him, and that, in vain,
Without this ceremonious subtlety.
And, woe is me ! I know not where to find him now,
Even should I seek him through this wide world.

Enter DAEMON

Daemon. Follow, and I will lead thee where he is.
Justina. And who art thou, who hast found entrance hither,
Into my chamber through the doors and locks ?
Art thou a monstrous shadow which my madness
Has formed in the idle air ?
Daemon. No. I am one
Called by the Thought which tyrannizes thee
From his eternal dwelling ; who this day
Is pledged to bear thee unto Cyprian.
Justina. So shall thy promise fail. This agony
Of passion which afflicts my heart and soul
May sweep imagination in its storm ;
The will is firm.
Daemon. Already half is done
In the imagination of an act.
The sin incurred, the pleasure then remains ;
Let not the will stop half-way on the road.
Justina. I will not be discouraged, nor despair,
Although I thought it, and although 'tis true
That thought is but a prelude to the deed :—

Thought is not in my power, but action is:
I will not move my foot to follow thee.
Daemon. But a far mightier wisdom than thine own
Exerts itself within thee, with such power
Compelling thee to that which it inclines
That it shall force thy step; how wilt thou then
Resist, Justina?
Justina. By my free-will.
Daemon. I
Must force thy will.
Justina. It is invincible;
It were not free if thou hadst power upon it.
[*He draws, but cannot move her.*
Daemon. Come, where a pleasure waits thee.
Justina. It were bought
Too dear.
Daemon. 'Twill soothe thy heart to softest peace.
Justina. 'Tis dread captivity.
Daemon. 'Tis joy, 'tis glory.
Justina. 'Tis shame, 'tis torment, 'tis despair.
Daemon. But how
Canst thou defend thyself from that or me,
If my power drags thee onward?
Justina. My defence
Consists in God.
[*He vainly endeavours to force her, and at last releases her.*
Daemon. Woman, thou hast subdued me,
Only by not owning thyself subdued.
But since thou thus findest defence in God,
I will assume a feignèd form, and thus
Make thee a victim of my baffled rage.
For I will mask a spirit in thy form
Who will betray thy name to infamy,
And doubly shall I triumph in thy loss,
First by dishonouring thee, and then by turning
False pleasure to true ignominy. [*Exit.*
Justina. I
Appeal to Heaven against thee; so that Heaven
May scatter thy delusions, and the blot
Upon my fame vanish in idle thought,
Even as flame dies in the envious air,
And as the floweret wanes at morning frost;
And thou shouldst never—But, alas! to whom
Do I still speak?—Did not a man but now
Stand here before me?—No, I am alone,
And yet I saw him. Is he gone so quickly?
Or can the heated mind engender shapes
From its own fear? Some terrible and strange
Peril is near. Lisander! father! lord!
Livia!—

Enter LISANDER *and* LIVIA

Lisander. Oh, my daughter! What?
Livia. What!
Justina. Saw you

A man go forth from my apartment now ?—
I scarce contain myself !
Lisander. A man here !
Justina. Have you not seen him ?
Livia. No, Lady.
Justina. I saw him.
Lisander. 'Tis impossible ; the doors
Which led to this appartment were all locked.
Livia (*aside*). I daresay it was Moscon whom she saw,
For he was locked up in my room.
Lisander. It must
Have been some image of thy phantasy.
Such melancholy as thou feedest is
Skilful in forming such in the vain air,
Out of the motes and atoms of the day.
Livia. My master's in the right.
Justina. Oh, would it were
Delusion ; but I fear some greater ill.
I feel as if out of my bleeding bosom
My heart was torn in fragments ; ay,
Some mortal spell is wrought against my frame ;
So potent was the charm that, had not God
Shielded my humble innocence from wrong,
I should have sought my sorrow and my shame
With willing steps.—Livia, quick, bring my cloak,
For I must seek refuge from these extremes
Even in the temple of the highest God
Where secretly the faithful worship.
Livia. Here
Justina (*putting on her cloak*). In this, as in a shroud of snow, may I
Quench the consuming fire in which I burn,
Wasting away !
Lisander. And I will go with thee.
Livia. When once I see them safe out of the house
I shall breathe freely.
Justina. So do I confide
In thy just favour, Heaven !
Lisander. Let us go.
Justina. Thine is the cause, great God ! turn for my sake,
And for Thine own, mercifully to me !

STANZAS FROM CALDERON'S CISMA DE INGLATERRA

[*Translated by Medwin and corrected by Shelley.* Publ. 1847. Shelley's corrections in italics.]

I

Hast thou not seen, officious with delight,
Move through the illumined air about the flower
The Bee, that fears to drink its purple light,
Lest danger lurk within that Rose's bower ?

Hast thou not marked the moth's enamoured flight
  About the Taper's flame at evening hour,
Till kindle in that monumental fire
His sunflower wings their own funereal pyre?

II

My heart, its wishes trembling to unfold,
  Thus round the Rose and Taper hovering came,
And Passion's slave, Distrust, in ashes cold,
  Smothered awhile, but could not quench the flame,—
Till Love, that grows by disappointment bold,
  And Opportunity, had conquered Shame;
And like the Bee and Moth, in act to close,
I burned my wings, and settled on the Rose.

SCENES FROM THE FAUST OF GOETHE

[Publ. in part (Scene II.) in *The Liberal*, No. 1, 1822; in full, 1824.]

SCENE I.—PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN. *The* LORD *and the* HOST *of* HEAVEN

Enter three ARCHANGELS

Raphael

THE sun makes music as of old
  Amid the rival spheres of Heaven,
On its predestined circle rolled
  With thunder speed: the Angels even
Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
  Though none its meaning fathom may:—
The world's unwithered countenance
  Is bright as at Creation's day.

Gabriel

And swift and swift, with rapid lightness,
  The adornèd Earth spins silently,
Alternating Elysian brightness
  With deep and dreadful night; the sea
Foams in broad billows from the deep
  Up to the rocks, and rocks and Ocean,
Onward, with spheres which never sleep,
  Are hurried in eternal motion.

Michael

And tempests in contention roar
  From land to sea, from sea to land;
And, raging, weave a chain of power,
  Which girds the earth, as with a band.—
A flashing desolation there,
  Flames before the thunder's way;
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
  The gentle changes of Thy day.

Chorus of the Three

The Angels draw strength from Thy glance,
  Though no one comprehend Thee may ;—
Thy world's unwithered countenance
  Is bright as on Creation's day.*

Enter MEPHISTOPHELES

Mephistopheles. As thou, O Lord, once more art kind enough
To interest Thyself in our affairs,
And ask, " How goes it with you there below ? "
And as indulgently at other times
Thou tookest not my visits in ill part,
Thou seest me here once more among Thy household.
Though I should scandalize this company,
You will excuse me if I do not talk
In the high style which they think fashionable ;
My pathos certainly would make You laugh too,
Had You not long since given over laughing.
Nothing know I to say of suns and worlds ;
I observe only how men plague themselves ;—

---

* *Raphael.* The sun sounds, according to ancient custom,
In the song of emulation of his brother-spheres,
And its fore-written circle
Fulfils with a step of thunder.
Its countenance gives the Angels strength
Though no one can fathom it.
The incredible high works
Are excellent as at the first day.
Gabriel. And swift, and inconceivably swift
The adornment of earth winds itself round,
And exchanges Paradise-clearness
With deep dreadful night.
The sea foams in broad waves
From its deep bottom, up to the rocks,
And rocks and sea are torn on together
In the eternal swift course of the spheres.
Michael. And storms roar in emulation
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And make, raging a chain
Of deepest operation round about.
There flames a flashing destruction
Before the path of the thunderbolt.
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle alternations of Thy day.
Chorus. Thy countenance gives the Angels strength,
Though none can comprehend Thee :
And all Thy lofty works
Are excellent as at the first day.

Such is a literal translation of this astonishing chorus ; it is impossible to represent in another language the melody of the versification ; even the volatile strength and delicacy of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and the reader is surprised to find a *caput mortuum.*

The little god o' the world keeps the same stamp,
As wonderful as on creation's day :—
A little better would he live, hadst Thou
Not given him a glimpse of Heaven's light
Which he calls reason, and employs it only
To live more beastlily than any beast.
With reverence to Your Lordship be it spoken,
He's like one of those long-legged grasshoppers,
Who flits and jumps about, and sings for ever
The same old song i' the grass. There let him lie,
Burying his nose in every heap of dung.
The Lord. Have you no more to say? Do you come here
Always to scold, and cavil, and complain?
Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?
Mephistopheles. No, Lord! I find all there, as ever, bad at best.
Even I am sorry for man's days of sorrow;
I could myself almost give up the pleasure
Of plaguing the poor things.
The Lord. Knowest thou Faust?
Mephistopheles. The Doctor?
The Lord. Ay; My servant Faust.
Mephistopheles. In truth
He serves You in a fashion quite his own;
And the fool's meat and drink are not of earth.
His aspirations bear him on so far
That he is half aware of his own folly,
For he demands from Heaven its fairest star,
And from the earth the highest joy it bears,
Yet all things far, and all things near, are vain
To calm the deep emotions of his breast.
The Lord. Though now he serves Me in a cloud of error,
I will soon lead him forth to the clear day.
When trees look green, full well the gardener knows
That fruits and blooms will deck the coming year.
Mephistopheles. What will You bet?—now I am sure of winning—
Only, observe You give me full permission
To lead him softly on my path.
The Lord. As long
As he shall live upon the earth, so long
Is nothing unto thee forbidden—Man
Must err till he has ceased to struggle.
Mephistopheles. Thanks.
And that is all I ask; for willingly
I never make acquaintance with the dead.
The full fresh cheeks of youth are food for me,
And if a corpse knocks, I am not at home.
For I am like a cat—I like to play
A little with the mouse before I eat it.
The Lord. Well, well! it is permitted thee. Draw thou
His spirit from its springs; as thou find'st power,
Seize him and lead him on thy downward path;
And stand ashamed when failure teaches thee
That a good man, even in his darkest longings,

Is well aware of the right way.
Mephistopheles. Well and good.
I am not in much doubt about my bet,
And if I lose, then 'tis Your turn to crow ;
Enjoy Your triumph then with a full breast.
Ay ; dust shall he devour, and that with pleasure,
Like my old paramour, the famous Snake.
The Lord. Pray come here when it suits you ; for I never
Had much dislike for people of your sort.
And, among all the Spirits who rebelled,
The knave was ever the least tedious to Me.
The active spirit of man soon sleeps, and soon
He seeks unbroken quiet ; therefore I
Have given him the Devil for a companion,
Who may provoke him to some sort of work,
And must create forever.—But ye, pure
Children of God, enjoy eternal beauty ;—
Let that which ever operates and lives
Clasp you within the limits of its love ;
And seize with sweet and melancholy thoughts
The floating phantoms of its loveliness.
[*Heaven closes ; the Archangels exeunt.*
Mephistopheles. From time to time I visit the old fellow,
And I take care to keep on good terms with Him.
Civil enough is the same God Almighty,
To talk so freely with the Devil himself.

SCENE II.—MAY-DAY NIGHT. *The Hartz Mountain, a desolate Country.* FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES.

Mephistopheles. Would you not like a broomstick ? As for me
I wish I had a good stout ram to ride ;
For we are still far from the appointed place.
Faust. This knotted staff is help enough for me,
Whilst I feel fresh upon my legs. What good
Is there in making short a pleasant way ?
To creep along the labyrinths of the vales,
And climb those rocks, where ever-bubbling springs,
Precipitate themselves in waterfalls,
Is the true sport that seasons such a path.
Already Spring kindles the birchen spray,
And the hoar pines already feel her breath :
Shall she not work also within our limbs ?
Mephistopheles. Nothing of such an influence do I feel.
My body is all wintry, and I wish
The flowers upon our paths were frost and snow.
But see how melancholy rises now,
Dimly uplifting her belated beam,

The blank unwelcome round of the red moon,
And gives so bad a light, that every step
One stumbles 'gainst some crag. With your permission,
I'll call on Ignis-fatuus to our aid:
I see one yonder burning jollily.
Halloo, my friend! may I request that you
Would favour us with your bright company?
Why should you blaze away there to no purpose?
Pray be so good as light us up this way.

Ignis-fatuus. With reverence be it spoken, I will try
To overcome the lightness of my nature;
Our course, you know, is generally zigzag.

Mephistopheles. Ha, ha! your worship thinks you have to deal
With men. Go straight on, in the Devil's name,
Or I shall puff your flickering life out.

Ignis-fatuus. Well,
I see you are the master of the house;
I will accommodate myself to you.
Only consider that to-night this mountain
Is all enchanted, and if Jack-a-lantern
Shows you his way, though you should miss your own,
You ought not to be too exact with him.

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, *and* IGNIS-FATUUS, *in alternate Chorus*

The limits of the sphere of dream,
The bounds of true and false, are past.
Lead us on, thou wandering Gleam,
Lead us onward, far and fast,
To the wide, the desert waste.

But see, how swift advance and shift
Trees behind trees, row by row,—
How, clift by clift, rocks bend and lift
Their frowning foreheads as we go.
The giant-snouted crags, ho! ho!
How they snort, and how they blow!

Through the mossy sods and stones,
Stream and streamlet hurry down—
A rushing throng! A sound of song
Beneath the vault of Heaven is blown!
Sweet notes of love, the speaking tones

Of this bright day, sent down to say
   That Paradise on Earth is known,
Resound around, beneath, above.
All we hope and all we love
Finds a voice in this blithe strain,
   Which wakens hill and wood and rill,
      And vibrates far o'er field and vale,
      And which Echo, like the tale
Of old times, repeats again.

To-whoo! to-whoo! near, nearer now
The sound of song, the rushing throng!
Are the screech, the lapwing, and the jay,
All awake as if 'twere day?
See, with long legs and belly wide,
   A salamander in the brake!
   Every root is like a snake,
And along the loose hillside,
With strange contortions through the night,
Curls, to seize or to affright;
And, animated, strong, and many,
They dart forth polypus-antennae,
To blister with their poison spume
The wanderer. Through the dazzling gloom
The many-coloured mice, that thread
The dewy turf beneath our tread,
In troops each other's motions cross,
Through the heath and through the moss;
And, in legions intertangled,
   The fire-flies flit, and swarm, and throng,
Till all the mountain depths are spangled.

Tell me, shall we go or stay?
   Shall we onward? Come along!
Everything around is swept
Forward, onward, far away!
Trees and masses intercept
The sight, and wisps on every side
Are puffed up and multiplied.

Mephistopheles. Now vigorously seize my skirt, and gain
This pinnacle of isolated crag.
One may observe with wonder from this point,
How Mammon glows among the mountains.

Faust. Ay—
And strangely through the solid depth below
A melancholy light, like the red dawn,
Shoots from the lowest gorge of the abyss
Of mountains, lightning hitherward: there rise
Pillars of smoke, here clouds float gently by;
Here the light burns soft as the enkindled air,
Or the illumined dust of golden flowers;
And now it glides like tender colours spreading;
And now bursts forth in fountains from the earth;
And now it winds, one torrent of broad light,
Through the far valley with a hundred veins;
And now once more within that narrow corner
Masses itself into intensest splendour.
And near us, see, sparks spring out of the ground,
Like golden sand scattered upon the darkness;
The pinnacles of that black wall of mountains
That hems us in are kindled.
Mephistopheles. Rare: in faith!
Does not Sir Mammon gloriously illuminate
His palace for this festival?—it is
A pleasure which you had not known before.
I spy the boisterous guests already.
Faust. How
The children of the wind rage in the air!
With what fierce strokes they fall upon my neck!

Mephistopheles

Cling tightly to the old ribs of the crag.
Beware! for if with them thou warrest
In their fierce flight towards the wilderness,
Their breath will sweep thee into dust, and drag
Thy body to a grave in the abyss.
A cloud thickens the night.
Hark! how the tempest crashes through the forest!
The owls fly out in strange affright;
The columns of the evergreen palaces
Are split and shattered;
The roots creak, and stretch, and groan;
And ruinously overthrown,
The trunks are crushed and shattered
By the fierce blast's unconquerable stress.
Over each other crack and crash they all
In terrible and intertangled fall;

And through the ruins of the shaken mountain
The airs hiss and howl—
It is not the voice of the fountain,
Nor the wolf in his midnight prowl.
Dost thou not hear?
Strange accents are ringing
Aloft, afar, anear?
The witches are singing!
The torrent of a raging wizard song
Streams the whole mountain along.

Chorus of Witches

The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
Now to the Brocken the witches go;
The mighty multitude here may be seen
Gathering, wizard and witch, below.
Sir Urian is sitting aloft in the air;
Hey over stock! and hey over stone!
'Twixt witches and incubi, what shall be done?
Tell it who dare! tell it who dare!

A Voice

Upon a sow-swine, whose farrows were nine,
Old Baubo rideth alone.

Chorus

Honour her, to whom honour is due,
Old mother Baubo, honour to you!
An able sow, with old Baubo upon her,
Is worthy of glory, and worthy of honour!
The legion of witches is coming behind,
Darkening the night, and outspeeding the wind—

A Voice

Which way comest thou?

A Voice

Over Ilsenstein;
The owl was awake in the white moonshine;
I saw her at rest in her downy nest,
And she stared at me with her broad, bright eyne.

Voices

And you may now as well take your course on to Hell,
Since you ride by so fast on the headlong blast.

A Voice

She dropped poison upon me as I passed.
Here are the wounds——

Chorus of Witches

Come away! come along!
The way is wide, the way is long,
But what is that for a Bedlam throng?
Stick with the prong, and scratch with the broom.
The child in the cradle lies strangled at home,
And the mother is clapping her hands.—

Semichorus of Wizards I

We glide in
Like snails when the women are all away;
And from a house once given over to sin
Woman has a thousand steps to stray.

Semichorus II

A thousand steps must a woman take,
Where a man but a single spring will make.

Voices above

Come with us, come with us, from Felsensee.

Voices below

With what joy would we fly through the upper sky!
We are washed, we are 'nointed, stark naked are we;
But our toil and our pain are forever in vain.

Both Choruses

The wind is still, the stars are fled,
The melancholy moon is dead;
The magic notes, like spark on spark,
Drizzle, whistling through the dark.
Come away!

Voices below

Stay, Oh, stay!

Voices above

Out of the crannies of the rocks
Who calls?

Voices below

Oh, let me join your flocks!

I, three hundred years have striven
To catch your skirt and mount to Heaven,—
And still in vain. Oh, might I be
With company akin to me!

Both Choruses

Some on a ram and some on a prong,
On poles and on broomsticks we flutter along;
Forlorn is the wight who can rise not to-night.

A Half-Witch-below

I have been tripping this many an hour:
Are the others already so far before?
No quiet at home, and no peace abroad!
And less methinks is found by the road.

Chorus of Witches

Come onward, away! aroint thee, aroint!
A witch to be strong must anoint—anoint—
Then every trough will be boat enough;
With a rag for a sail we can sweep through the sky,
Who flies not to-night, when means he to fly?

Both Choruses

We cling to the skirt, and we strike on the ground;
Witch-legions thicken around and around;
Wizard-swarms cover the heath all over. [*They descend.*

Mephistopheles

What thronging, dashing, raging, rustling;
What whispering, babbling, hissing, bustling;
What glimmering, spurting, stinking, burning,
As Heaven and Earth were overturning.
There is a true witch element about us;
Take hold on me, or we shall be divided:—
Where are you?
Faust (*from a distance*). Here!
Mephistopheles. What!
I must exert my authority in the house.
Place for young Voland! pray make way, good people.
Take hold on me, doctor, and with one step
Let us escape from this unpleasant crowd:
They are too mad for people of my sort.
Just there shines a peculiar kind of light—

Something attracts me in those bushes. Come
This way: we shall slip down there in a minute.
Faust. Spirit of Contradiction! Well, lead on—
'Twere a wise feat indeed to wander out
Into the Brocken upon May-day night,
And then to isolate oneself in scorn,
Disgusted with the humours of the time.
Mephistopheles. See yonder, round a many-coloured flame
A merry club is huddled altogether:
Even with such little people as sit there
One would not be alone.
Faust. Would that I were
Up yonder in the glow and whirling smoke,
Where the blind million rush impetuously
To meet the evil ones; there might I solve
Many a riddle that torments me!
Mephistopheles. Yet
Many a riddle there is tied anew
Inextricably. Let the great world rage!
We will stay here safe in the quiet dwellings.
'Tis an old custom. Men have ever built
Their own small world in the great world of all.
I see young witches naked there, and old ones
Wisely attired with greater decency.
Be guided now by me, and you shall buy
A pound of pleasure with a dram of trouble.
I hear them tune their instruments—one must
Get used to this damned scraping. Come, I'll lead you
Among them; and what there you do and see,
As a fresh compact 'twixt us two shall be.
How say you now? this space is wide enough—
Look forth, you cannot see the end of it—
An hundred bonfires burn in rows, and they
Who throng around them seem innumerable:
Dancing and drinking, jabbering, making love,
And cooking, are at work. Now tell me, friend,
What is there better in the world than this?
Faust. In introducing us, do you assume
The character of Wizard or of Devil?
Mephistopheles. In truth, I generally go about
In strict incognito; and yet one likes
To wear one's orders upon gala days.
I have no ribbon at my knee; but here
At home, the cloven foot is honourable.

See you that snail there?—she comes creeping up,
And with her feeling eyes hath smelt out something.
I could not, if I would, mask myself here.
Come now, we'll go about from fire to fire:
I'll be the Pimp, and you shall be the Lover.
[*To some old Women, who are sitting round a heap of glimmering coals.*
Old gentlewomen, what do you do out here?
You ought to be with the young rioters
Right in the thickest of the revelry—
But every one is best content at home.

General

Who dare confide in right or a just claim?
  So much as I had done for them! and now—
With women and the people 'tis the same,
  Youth will stand foremost ever,—age may go
To the dark grave unhonoured.

Minister

Nowadays
  People assert their rights: they go too far;
But as for me, the good old times I praise;
    Then we were all in all—'twas something worth
  One's while to be in place and wear a star;
    That was indeed the golden age on earth.

Parvenu

We too are active, and we did and do
What we ought not, perhaps; and yet we now
Will seize, whilst all things are whirled round and round,
A spoke of Fortune's wheel, and keep our ground.

Author

Who now can taste a treatise of deep sense
And ponderous volume? 'tis impertinence
To write what none will read, therefore will I
To please the young and thoughtless people try.
Mephistopheles (*who at once appears to have grown very old*). I find the people ripe for the last day,
Since I last came up to the wizard mountains;
And as my little cask runs turbid now,
So is the world drained to the dregs.
Pedlar-witch. Look here,

Gentlemen; do not hurry on so fast;
And lose the chance of a good pennyworth.
I have a pack full of the choicest wares
Of every sort, and yet in all my bundle
Is nothing like what may be found on earth;
Nothing that in a moment will make rich
Men and the world with fine malicious mischief—
There is no dagger drunk with blood; no bowl
From which consuming poison may be drained
By innocent and healthy lips; no jewel,
The price of an abandoned maiden's shame;
No sword which cuts the bond it cannot loose,
Or stabs the wearer's enemy in the back;
No——

Mephistopheles. Gossip, you know little of these times.
What has been, has been; what is done, is past,
They shape themselves into the innovations
They breed, and innovation drags us with it.
The torrent of the crowd sweeps over us:
You think to impel, and are yourself impelled.

Faust. What is that yonder?

Mephistopheles. Mark her well. It is Lilith.

Faust. Who?

Mephistopheles. Lilith, the first wife of Adam.
Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks;
And when she winds them round a young man's neck,
She will not ever set him free again.

Faust

There sit a girl and an old woman—they
Seem to be tired with pleasure and with play.

Mephistopheles

There is no rest to-night for any one:
When one dance ends another is begun;
Come, let us do it. We shall have rare fun.

[Faust *dances and sings with a girl, and* Mephistopheles *with an old Woman.*

Faust

I had once a lovely dream
In which I saw an apple-tree,

Where two fair apples with their gleam
  To climb and taste attracted me.

The Girl

She with apples you desired
  From Paradise came long ago:
With joy I feel that if required,
  Such still within my garden grow.

. . . . . .

Procto-Phantasmist. What is this cursèd multitude about?
Have we not long since proved to demonstration
That ghosts move not on ordinary feet?
But these are dancing just like men and women.
The Girl. What does he want then at our ball?
Faust. Oh! he
Is far above us all in his conceit:
Whilst we enjoy, he reasons of enjoyment;
And any step which in our dance we tread,
If it be left out of his reckoning,
Is not to be considered as a step.
There are few things that scandalize him not:
And when you whirl round in the circle now,
As he went round the wheel in his old mill,
He says that you go wrong in all respects,
Especially if you congratulate him
Upon the strength of the resemblance.
Procto-Phantasmist. Fly!
Vanish! Unheard-of impudence! What, still there!
In this enlightened age too, since you have been
Proved not to exist!—But this infernal brood
Will hear no reason and endure no rule.
Are we so wise, and is the *pond* still haunted?
How long have I been sweeping out this rubbish
Of superstition, and the world will not
Come clean with all my pains!—it is a case
Unheard of!
The Girl. Then leave off teasing us so.
Procto-Phantasmist. I tell you, spirits, to your faces now,
That I should not regret this despotism
Of spirits, but that mine can wield it not.
To-night I shall make poor work of it,
Yet I will take a round with you, and hope
Before my last step in the living dance
To beat the poet and the devil together.

Mephistopheles. At last he will sit down in some foul puddle;
That is his way of solacing himself;
Until some leech, diverted with his gravity,
Cures him of spirits and the spirit together.
[*To* Faust, *who has seceded from the dance.*
Why do you let that fair girl pass from you,
Who sung so sweetly to you in the dance?
Faust. A red mouse in the middle of her singing
Sprung from her mouth.
Mephistopheles. That was all right, my friend:
Be it enough that the mouse was not grey.
Do not disturb your hour of happiness
With close consideration of such trifles.
Faust. Then saw I——
Mephistopheles. What?
Faust. Seest thou not a pale,
Fair girl, standing alone, far, far away?
She drags herself now forward with slow steps,
And seems as if she moved with shackled feet:
I cannot overcome the thought that she
Is like poor Margaret.
Mephistopheles. Let it be—pass on—
No good can come of it—it is not well
To meet it—it is an enchanted phantom,
A lifeless idol; with its numbing look.
It freezes up the blood of man; and they
Who meet its ghastly stare are turned to stone,
Like those who saw Medusa.
Faust. Oh, too true!
Her eyes are like the eyes of a fresh corpse
Which no belovèd hand has closed, alas!
That is the breast which Margaret yielded to me—
Those are the lovely limbs which I enjoyed!
Mephistopheles. It is all magic, poor deluded fool!
She looks to every one like his first love.
Faust. Oh, what delight! what woe! I cannot turn
My looks from her sweet piteous countenance.
How strangely does a single blood-red line,
Not broader than the sharp edge of a knife,
Adorn her lovely neck!
Mephistopheles. Ay, she can carry
Her head under her arm upon occasion;
Perseus has cut it off for her. These pleasures

End in delusion.—Gain this rising ground,
It is as airy here as in a . . .
And if I am not mightily deceived,
I see a theatre.—What may this mean?

Attendant

Quite a new piece, the last of seven, for 'tis
The custom now to represent that number.
'Tis written by a Dilettante, and
The actors who perform are Dilettanti;
Excuse me, gentlemen; but I must vanish,
I am a Dilettante curtain-lifter.

Printed at THE BALLANTYNE PRESS *by*
SPOTTISWOODE, BALLANTYNE & CO. LTD.
Colchester, London & Eton

DUE DATE

MAY 2 2 2002		
MAY 2 3 2002		